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ABSTRACT

Based on a 1999 survey of 5,054 adults, this report describes those who are and are not participating in adult learning in Great Britain. It covers factors such as age, gender, previous education experiences, socioeconomic background, and geographical location and points to the workplace as a significant source of information, motivation, and support for learning. Replicating a 1996 survey, this latest research shows little change in overall national participation patterns, though there are some significant changes among certain groups. Some socially excluded groups with particular needs and interests are succeeding in gaining access to learning. The report's findings reveal that the divide between the learning-rich and the learning-poor still exists, and that the gap is not closing. A danger that is looming is that this divide is being compounded by an emerging information divide in which people with access to the new communications technologies are more likely to have access to learning than those without; access to new and older communications technologies is spread very unevenly across social groups and regions; and many people have access through work or an educational institution, but surprising numbers do not have access to new technologies either at work or at home. Data are provided in 55 tables and 2 figures. Appendixes contain 41 references and the questionnaire. (YLB)

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NAOMI SARGANT

THE LEARNING DIVIDE *revisited*

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a report on the findings of a UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and learning

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THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

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THE
LEARNING DIVIDE
REVISITED

A report of the findings of a UK-wide survey on
adult participation in education and learning
carried out for
NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning,
by Research Surveys of Great Britain (RSGB)

NAOMI SARGANT

NIACE
THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION
FOR ADULT LEARNING

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NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties and disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

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Introduction

The Learning Divide Revisited is the latest in a sequence of quantitative surveys of adult participation in the United Kingdom, led by Naomi Sargant and commissioned by NIACE which stretch back over twenty years. This one reports on a 1999 survey of 5,054 adults. Taken together, the sequence maps a consistent pattern in which the gap between the learning-rich and the learning-poor is clear, and if anything intensifying. This study highlights, additionally, the parallel importance of an information divide which tends to reinforce the learning divide.

The results pose a challenge for a Government committed to the extension of learning opportunities for all, throughout their lives. Despite the range of measures taken to expand publicly-funded learning, participation overall remains static. Given the importance of the workplace as a site for learning highlighted here, the results suggest that the Government's continuing voluntary approach to employer training may not secure the results needed to overcome what the CBI calls 'Britain's long tail of under-achievement'.

The survey shows that a quarter of all those learning are studying computing. Learners of all ages are recognising the role of information and communications technology for work and for wider uses in society. Yet as the chapter here on the information divide makes clear, there are sharp differentials in access to the technology. Government has recognised this in a number of measures to make computing centres available throughout the country, and through the establishment of UfI, the University for Industry. There is still a long way to go, however, to make the plans a reality on the ground.

The most challenging results of this survey, as of its predecessors, is the evidence it offers of the need to make learning a realistic option for people who currently see little point in taking it up. Making learning opportunities relevant and attractive to the lives of the poorest communities, the old, the unemployed, and those with fewest formal skills remains the key task in creating the infrastructure of the learning society.

It would be good to think that by the time the next major survey reports, there will be evidence of a narrowing of the divide, and an expansion overall of participation.

NIACE owes a debt of gratitude to Naomi Sargant for leading this survey, and to Helen Prew for many hours of creative and constructive contribution, as well as for making the charts and tables accessible. We are also grateful to the European Social Fund for support for the study.

Key findings

Introduction

1 *The Learning Divide Revisited* reports on a survey carried out for NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, by Research Surveys of Great Britain (RSGB) together with Ulster Marketing Surveys. Between 27 January and 14 February 1999, a sample of 5,054 adults aged 17 or over across the UK nations were interviewed.

2 In Northern Ireland a booster sample of 143 adults was interviewed to enable separate results to be analysed for the second such survey of the province.

3 The national sample for Wales was boosted to double its correct UK proportion in order to enable a separate set of tables for Wales to be produced, but the samples for each nation are shown in their correct proportions in this report.

Stability of 1999 and 1996 surveys

4 The survey shows a high degree of stability with the 1996 Survey (Sargant *et al*, 1997), and confirms that the UK still faces an enormous task in involving all its people in the learning society, and that the learning divide between the learning-rich and the learning-poor is growing.

Current participation

5 Nearly one-quarter (22%) of all adults say they are currently learning. A further 18% have been learning in the last three years. Three in five of all adults have not participated in the last three years.

6 More men (24%) than women (21%) are currently learning. However, when current and recent learners are taken together the numbers are almost equal (41% of men compared with 40% of women).

7 Significantly more women (40%) than men (34%) report undertaking no learning since leaving full-time education. Whilst the figure for women has remained stable (40% compared with 41% in 1996) the percentage of men reporting no learning since full-time education has risen (34% compared with 31% in 1996).

8 Socio-economic class continues to be a key to understanding the learning divide. Over half (58%) of all upper- and middle-class (AB) respondents are current or recent learners, compared with just over one-third (36%) of the skilled working class (C2) and one-quarter (24%) of the unskilled working class and people on limited incomes (DE).

9 Almost twice as many white-collar workers, C1s, (32%) as skilled manual workers, C2s, (17%) currently participate. *The Learning Divide* (Sargant *et al*, 1997) reported identical findings in 1997, and a comparable NIACE survey in 1990 showed 31% of C1s currently studying and/or learning informally, compared with 21% among C2s.

10 The largest increase in learning between 1996 and 1999 is among those who are working part-time, from 42% to 50%, followed by those "not working" from 23% to 30%. The main decrease is among the retired, from 20% to 16%.

11 Thirty-nine per cent of C2s and 57% of DEs have done no learning since completing full-time education. Whilst it is encouraging to see a fall in C2 non-participants, (39% compared with 42% in 1996), it is clear that the gap between the learning-rich and the learning-poor is growing wider with 57% of DEs reporting no learning since leaving full-time education, compared with 53% in 1996.

12 Employment status plays a major role in learning opportunities. For many people, the workplace provides resources and opportunities to take up learning and, often, the motivation to learn. Half of full-time workers (51%) and part-time workers (50%) are current/recent learners, compared with 41% of unemployed people.

13 Those who are not working (30%) and retired people (16%) have almost half the levels of participation of people in work or seeking work.

14 The length of initial education continues to be the clearest forward indicator of participation in adult learning. The more initial education and training people receive the greater the likelihood of their learning later on. The group who left school at 16 or earlier shows 25% as current/recent learners. This compares with more than 50% of current/recent learners among all who stayed on at school post-16, and 61% among those who stayed on post-20.

15 There are marked national differences in levels of participation in the nations of the UK. Overall 40% of the UK population are current/recent learners. The national totals are Wales 43%, England 41%, Scotland 33%, and Northern Ireland 32%. Wales shows an increase over 1996 of 6% and Northern Ireland of 4%.

16 There are continuing differences, too, in the English regions with East Anglia and the East Midlands (both 48%) topping the list; and London (46%), South East (42%), Yorkshire and Humberside (42%) and the North West (41%) all recording encouraging proportions of current/recent learners, but with the South-West (37%), and the West Midlands and the North both at 34% having the lowest proportions.

17 Funding of learning and its provision has typically been age-related, and age is also a key way to understand demand. The proportion of current/recent learners decreases with each

successive age cohort, not surprisingly. Changes between 1996 and 1999 are a drop in the 17-19 age group, from 86% to 81%, an increase in all the labour-market age-groups but a drop again in the two oldest age-groups.

Future learning intentions

18 Less than two in five adults (38%) say they are very or fairly likely to take up learning in the next three years.

19 More than half (59%) say that they are very or fairly unlikely to take up any learning in the future, an increase of 4% from 1996.

20 Recent experience of learning is a powerful influence in whether adults expect to study in the future. While over three-quarters (76%) of current learners and 60% of recent learners are likely to learn in the next three years, the figure drops to a quarter (25%) among past learners and 12% among non-learners.

21 Eighty-seven per cent of people who have done no learning since completing full-time education say they are unlikely to learn in the future, an increase of 6% on 1996.

22 Among people of working age, 57% of people who are not working, 51% of those working part-time, and 47% of unemployed people say they are unlikely to learn in the future.

23 People in Scotland (33%) and Northern Ireland (29%) are markedly less likely to have plans for future study than in England (38%) and Wales (46%).

Subjects of learning

24 Vocational, professional and work-related studies continue to dominate the subjects adults are currently or recently studying.

25 Computer studies leads the list of all subjects studied (25%) with 19% noting it as their main subject. Shorthand/typing and office training was a subject only for women (14% in 1980 and 12% in 1990) but it has given way to computer studies, now a main subject both for men (21%) and women (17%) in 1999. Computing is motivating to people across the board, for all age groups and for both public and private reasons.

26 Three subject areas have decreased in take-up; social sciences, from 6% to 3%, business management from 12% to 10% and other professional qualifications, from 11% to 7%. Two others have increased their take-up, but only by 2%: nursing/health studies from 8% to 10% and creative arts from 3% to 5%.

27 The study of all forms of engineering appears to have remained static, following a drop to 7% in 1990, and to 4% in 1996 and in 1999.

28 The demand for foreign languages has remained stable over the two decades, at between 8% and 10%, but is age-related. Foreign languages are taken in greater numbers by retired people (18%) and by unemployed people (8%). Retired people also take up other 'leisure' subjects

in greater numbers (10%). Creative arts are also taken by the retired (11%), the unemployed (8%) and by full-time students (13%).

29 More women give personal and educational reasons for their choice of study than men (51% compared with 42%) while more men than women give work-related reasons (52% compared with 43%). Work-related reasons dominate all age-groups between 20 and 54.

30 Just over a third (35%) choose what to study for personal development reasons. However, a majority of older learners (48% of 55-64s, 73% of 65-74s and 75% of 75+s) learn for personal development.

31 Eleven per cent say they choose their subjects to get a recognised qualification or to get on a future course.

32 One in 20 people of working age had no choice in their main subject of learning: it was chosen by their employer.

Information and advice

33 Information, advice and guidance become more important as people enter and re-enter learning opportunities throughout their lives. Different age groups gain information about learning from different sources.

34 The workplace is particularly important for all age groups from 25 to 64, with almost a third of people overall obtaining information about what to learn from the workplace.

35 Formal education and the careers service play a much bigger role for young people seeking information about what to study: 36% of 17-19-year-olds name school as their main source of information, 33% name further education/technical college, and 8% name the careers services. Universities are named by 21% of 20-24-year-olds.

36 Further education colleges are increasingly establishing themselves as information providers, quoted by 13% overall and by 15% of women.

37 Informal sources are more important for older people with family and friends ranked highest, followed by newspaper advertisements, adult education services and the public library.

38 Sources of information and advice vary across the nations of the UK. The workplace is most important in Scotland (40%) followed by England (31%) and Wales (26%). In Northern Ireland the workplace only rates 17%; and family and friends are twice as important as in the other nations.

39 Whilst the potential for new technologies to deliver information, advice and guidance is now well understood, its use is still low: just 1% quote the internet, TV or phone lines as sources of information. To utilise new methods will require cultural change as well as technological access.

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Place of study

40 Further Education colleges (20%) are the most reported location for learning overall, followed equally by the workplace (18%) and universities (18%), learning at home informally (10%), and adult education centres (8%). Further education colleges are the main place of learning for 17-19s (46%) and 20-24-year-olds (22%) and continue to be an important provider for between 13% and 18% of all other age groups. Universities' use drops to 12% and under for all aged 35 and over. Adult education and community centres are most important for middle and older age groups as is informal learning. The highest proportion of men (21%) are learning at work compared with 15% of women, while the highest proportion of women are learning at a further education college (23%) compared with men (17%).

Length of study

41 Fifty-six per cent of those surveyed have been learning their main subject for more than a year, and 5% for less than one month. The 1999 Survey shows the same proportion studying for less than one year (42%) as in 1996. However, 4% more people are learning for less than three months in 1999.

Qualifications

42 Two-thirds of all adults studying are aiming for qualifications. High proportions of learners continue to aim for qualifications through to their mid-fifties.

43 There is, however, still a relatively low level of take-up of courses leading to NVQs, SVQs, GNVQs or GSVQs (15%).

44 17-24-year-olds are mainly aiming for A levels and NVQs or a first degree, as is to be expected. While there are smaller groups of older learners who are aiming for NVQs, there are also continuing groups of adults aiming for City and Guilds qualifications and for HNCs/HNDs.

45 Seventy-one per cent of the overall total hold some educational qualification, with higher numbers among full-time (85%) and part-time (75%) workers than for unemployed people (72%) and others not working (63%).

46 Ninety-one per cent of those aged 17-19 hold educational qualifications but the proportion declines slightly between the 20-44 age groups. There is then a greater decline in educational qualifications held by older age groups with 63% of 45-64s, 44% of 65-74s, and 40% of 75+s, reflecting the changes in educational provision over the years.

Financial support

47 As in 1996, one quarter of learners have no fees to pay. Of those with fees to pay more women (35%) than men (26%) pay their own fees, while more men (19%) than women have fees paid by their employer (13%).

48 More than twice as many full-time (27%) as part-time (10%) employees get employer support for outside fees.

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49 Twice as many full-time (14%) as part-time (7%) employees get employer-funded provision of learning.

50 Equal proportions of men and women receive a government or local authority grant.

51 The group where the highest proportion of learners pays fees is retired people (53%), followed by those working part-time (39%), women (35%) and those not working (31%).

52 The youngest and oldest age groups benefit most from having no fees to pay, thanks to mandatory grants for the young or fee remission for the old. Family support is highest for conventional age student groups. Employer support is most important in the middle years. Ten per cent of 20-24-year-olds are on other government funding.

53 Participation in learning incurs additional costs. Forty-three per cent of current/recent learners mention equipment costs and 31% travel costs, but only 4% mention loss of wages. More women than men record travel costs (33% compared with 26%) and 8% of women with children aged 0-4 record childcare costs.

54 Employment status has an impact on the additional costs of learning. Forty-one per cent of unemployed people and 36% of part-time employees cite travel costs, compared with 24% of full-time employees.

Giving up courses early

55 At the time of interview, nearly two-thirds of respondents were still studying their main course, just over one-third had completed it and 5% had given up before the end. The groups showing higher proportions giving up before the end of their course are the unemployed (15%), DEs (10%), those with no educational qualifications (10%), recent learners (10%), those who are 75+ (10%), those not working (9%), those with no phone (9%), those with no personal computer access (9%), and those not likely to learn in the future (8%).

56 Based on those who gave up during the course, pressure of work or job change (18%), health reasons (15%) and finance (11%) are the most often cited reasons. For women pressures of work/job change was the main reason for giving up before the end of a course (27%). For men, cost/financial pressures was the main reason (21%).

Reasons for not taking up learning

57 There continues to be a large group of people, over a quarter (27%) of those who are not very likely to learn in the future who say this is because they are not interested or do not want to. This rises to 40% among the group without post-school learning experience and no current expectation of learning, followed by 19% who 'feel they are too old/ill/disabled', and 12% who 'don't feel anything prevents them'.

58 The important and challenging group of current learners who are 'not very likely to learn within the next three years' say they 'do not feel that anything prevents them' (31%). The reasons that follow are work/other time pressures (21%), cost/money (11%), lack of interest (10%). The pattern for recent learners is similar.

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59 As many as 13% of all women cite childcare or care for other dependants as the barrier to joining in. This rises to 20% for people with children aged 5-15 and 37% with children aged 0-4.

60 Focusing on those working full-time who give specific reasons, "work/other time pressures" is quoted most often as a reason for not taking up learning (31%), followed by inability to get time off work (9%) and cost/money (8%).

Personal circumstances and learning

61 Participation in adult learning can be related to major life changes and events. Wanting promotion at work (72%), moving house or home (59%), involvement in a marriage or relationship breakdown (49%) and losing a job (46%) all relate to groups with higher proportions of current/recent learners than in the population as a whole.

62 Almost half (48%) of those who 'want to help their children learn' are themselves adult learners compared to 40% overall.

63 The 1999 survey shows an increase of 5% in the population as a whole taking early retirement. Disappointingly, however, this relates to a decrease rather than an increase in current/recent learners (22% in 1999 compared to 33% in 1996).

Attitudes to learning

64 General support for the idea of lifelong learning continues at a high level: more than nine in ten (94%) believe that 'learning is something people do throughout their lives'.

65 Nearly three out of four people (72%) are confident about learning new skills. This rises to over nine out of ten (92%) among current/recent learners, but is down to half (54%) among people with no learning since leaving school.

66 In 1996, the two statements about the benefits of training – that people found their jobs more interesting or end up with better promotion or pay – were both agreed to by seven out of ten people. In 1999 agreement to the second "better promotion/pay" dropped by 10%; a negative change of possible concern.

67 An encouraging change is a drop in the proportion who think that there is not enough help and advice about learning from 53% in 1996 to 40% in 1999.

68 Forty-five per cent of those with no learning since leaving school do not see why they should pay for learning that is do with their career, although only 34% do not think that they should have to learn for their job in their own time.

69 Some groups typically considered at risk of social inclusion show quite high rates of current learning: computer studies is the subject of choice for many of them. Their motives for learning are mainly work-related: to get a job or help in their current job. They benefit particularly if they also have a supportive work environment. The groups which miss out more on workplace support are the minority ethnic groups, learners in Wales and Northern Ireland, those who are

working part-time, are unemployed or not working. The workplace provides a vital source of information for those without any personal computer/internet access.

The information divide

70 Access to new communications technologies is heavily slanted to upper socio-economic groups, to the younger age groups and to those with access through the workplace or an educational or other organisation. Though proportions of personal computer owners connected to the internet are increasing, proportions with personal computers have not increased much (35%), with families of young children showing the highest proportion (52%).The danger is that the emerging information divide will reinforce the learning divide and that the two deficits will feed on each other.

Contents

Introduction iii
Key findings iv
List of tables and figures xv
1 **The background to the research** 1
2 **Current and recent participation in learning** 4
Participation in learning, men and women compared 4
Participation in learning, by socio-economic class 5
Participation in learning, by employment status 6
Participation in learning, by terminal age of education 6
Participation in learning, by terminal age of education (revised age groups) 7
Participation in learning, by nation of the UK and rural/urban residence 8
Participation in learning, by English region 8
3 **Participation in learning: trends over time** 9
Current/recent learning by age, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 10
Current/recent learning by socio-economic class, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 11
Current learning by socio-economic class, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 11
Current/recent learning by region and nation, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 12
4 **Future intentions to take up learning** 13
Future intentions to take up learning, by socio-economic class, 1996 and 1999 compared 13
Future intentions to take up learning, by gender and learning status 14
Future intentions to take up learning, by employment status 15
5 **Subjects of current or recent learning** 16
Main subject and all subjects of study, by nations of the UK 18
All subjects of study – summary of main groupings by nations of the UK 19
Main subject of current/recent study, by gender, main reason for study and future plans for learning 20
6 **Patterns of subject choice in relation to age and employment status** 22
All subjects of current/recent study, by age 23
All subjects of current/recent study, by employment status 24

7 **Reasons for choosing main subject of current/recent learning** 25
Reason for choosing main subject of learning 26
8 **Source of information about main current/recent learning** 27
Source of information about main current/recent learning 28
Source of information about main current/recent learning, by nation of the UK 30
9 **The main location of learning of current/recent learners** 31
Main location of current/recent learning, by age 32
Main location of current/recent learning, by gender, 1996 and 1999 compared 33
Main location of current/recent learning, by socio-economic group and all giving specified reasons for learning 34
10 **Length of current/recent study** 35
Length of time learners have been studying/expect to study their main subject 35
11 **The role of qualifications** 36
Qualifications, if any, learners are/were aiming for 37
Qualifications, if any, learners are/were aiming for, by age 38
12 **Qualifications and the new framework for education and training targets** 39
Highest qualification held, by gender and employment status 40
Highest qualification held, by age 41
13 **Barriers to learning: access and learning support** 42
Sources used for payment of fees, by gender, socio-economic group and employment status 43
Sources used for payment of fees, by age 44
Sources used for payment of fees, by English region 45
Other costs of learning, by employment status 46
14 **Factors affecting access and dropout** 47
Proportion of current/recent learners giving up before the end of the course, by gender 47
Reasons for giving up before finishing the course 48
Main factors preventing learning these days, by gender and learning status 50
Main factors preventing learning these days, by employment status 51
Relationship of participation in study to recent life experiences 52
15 **Attitudes to learning and future plans for learning** 54
Proportion agreeing strongly/agreeing with given statement, 1996 and 1999 compared 55
Proportion of group specified giving subjects they would like to learn about, 1994, 1996 and 1999 compared 56
Subjects people are interested in learning about in the future, 1996 and 1999 compared 58
Subjects people are interested in learning about in the future, by learning status and future learning intentions 60
Main subjects of future interest to current learners and future learners 61

16 **Social inclusion** 62
Groups as a proportion of the survey population; proportions within groups who are current/recent learners 63
Subjects of interest to the many 64
Study motivation 64
The importance of the workplace as a support for learning 67
Accessible learning places 69
Financial support 71
Plans for future learning 71
17 **The information divide** 75
Access to communications technology at home and at work/institution 76
Access at home to communications technology, by socio-economic class 78
Access at home to communications technology, by gender, socio-economic class and number of children 78
Access at home to communications technology, by age 79
Proportion with personal computer at home and connected to the internet, by English regions, nation and by rural/urban residence 80
Access at home to communications technology, by working status 81
Access to communications technology at work or at an institution, by working status 82
18 **Research background and issues** 83
Participation as a research issue 86
The return of educational research to the public agenda 90
References 93
Appendix 1: RSGB's Omnibus Survey and random location sampling method 96
Appendix 2: A guide to socio-economic class 98
Appendix 3: Notes on the tables 99
Appendix 4: Analysis of weighted and unweighted samples 100
Appendix 5: Standard regions 102
Appendix 6: The questionnaire 103

List of tables and figures

1: Participation in learning, men and women compared 4

2: Participation in learning, by socio-economic class 5

3: Participation in learning, by employment status 6

4: Participation in learning, by terminal age of education 6

5: Participation in learning, by terminal age of education (revised age groups) 7

6: Participation in learning, by nation of the UK and rural/urban residence 8

7: Participation in learning, by English region 8

8: Current/recent learning by age, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 10

9: Current/recent learning by socio-economic class, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 11

10: Current learning by socio-economic class, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 11

11: Current/recent participation by region and nation, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared 12

12: Future intentions to take up learning, by socio-economic class, 1996 and 1999 compared 13

13: Future intentions to take up learning, by gender and learning status 14

14: Future intentions to take up learning, by employment status 15

15: Main subject and all subjects of study, by nations of the UK 18

16: All subjects of study – summary of main groupings by nations of the UK 19

17: Main subject of current/recent study, by gender, main reason for study and future plans for learning 20

18: All subjects of current/recent study, by age 23

19: All subjects of current/recent study, by employment status 24

20: Reason for choosing subject of main learning 26

21: Source of information about main current/recent learning 28

22: Source of information about main current/recent learning, by nation of the UK 30

23: Main location of current/recent learning, by age 32

24: Main location of current/recent learning, by gender, 1996 and 1999 compared 33

25: Main place of learning, by social class and all giving specified reasons for learning 34

26: Length of time learners have been studying/expect to study their main subject 35

27: Qualifications, if any, learners are/were aiming for 37

28: Qualifications, if any, learners are/were aiming for, by age 38

29: Highest qualification held, by gender and employment status 40

30: Highest qualification held, by age 41

31: Sources used for payment of fees, by gender, social class and employment status 43

32: Sources used for payment of fees, by age 44

33: Sources used for payment of fees, by English region 45

34: Other costs of learning, by employment status 46

35: Proportion of current/recent learners giving up before the end of the course, by gender 47

36: Reasons for giving up before finishing the course 48

37: Main things preventing learning these days, by gender and learning status (prompted list) 50

38: Main things preventing learning these days, by employment status 51

39: Relationship of participation in study to recent life experiences 52

40: Proportion agreeing strongly/agreeing with given statement 55

41: Proportion of group specified giving subjects they would like to learn about, 1994, 1996 and 1999 compared 56

42: Subjects people are interested in learning about in the future, 1996 and 1999 compared 58

43: Subjects people are interested in learning about in the future, by learning status and future learning intentions 60

44: Main subjects of future interests to current learners and future learners 61

45: Social inclusion: subjects studied by specified groups 65

46: Social inclusion: reasons for learning and progression, by specified groups 66

47: Social inclusion: source of information about learning, and place of learning, by specified groups 68

48: Social inclusion: financial support 70

49: Social inclusion: future learning intentions, and obstacles, by specified groups 72

50: Access to communications technology at home and at work/institution 76

51: Access at home to communications technology, by gender, social class and number of children 78

52: Access at home to communications technology, by age 79

53: Proportion with personal computer at home and connected to the internet, by English regions, nation and by rural/urban residence 80

54: Access at home to communications technology, by working status 81

55: Access to communications technology at work or at an institution, by working status 82

Figures:

1: Groups as a proportion of the survey population; proportions within groups who are current/recent learners 63

2: Access at home to communciations technology, by socio-economic class 78

The background to the research

After decades of lip-service to the importance of continuing education and lifelong learning, government is now committed to raising it higher up the list of educational and social priorities. It is to be hoped that the arguments about terminology and demarcation issues between providers which have continued for too many years can be put on one side in the interests of the needs of adult learners for varied, flexible and accessible provision. Lifelong learning is not a new sector of education and training to be fought for in competition with other sectors. It is, quite simply, the expectation that people will be able to choose to come in and out of different learning opportunities throughout their lives, and that educational providers at all levels will expect to meet the varied needs of adults of all ages.

Of course, governments from time to time will have different priorities for their national investment in learning and training, and of course employers will wish to invest to meet their particular skill needs, just as individuals will have their own priorities for learning as well as for their use of time and money. It is the expectation that learning will become the norm among adults that is the key to change.

Following the 1997 election, the new Government early on offered evidence of its commitment to adult learning by setting up a council, the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (NAGCELL), to advise them on continuing education and lifelong learning under the chairmanship of Professor Robert Fryer. Its commitment was further spelt out in the Green Paper, *The Learning Age*, published in February 1998. The Green Paper set out a number of proposals:

- to expand further and higher education
- to make it easier for firms and individuals to learn by creating the University for Industry
- to set up individual learning accounts
- to invest in young people
- to double the help for basic skills among adults
- to widen participation in and access to learning
- to raise standards across teaching and learning
- to set and publish clear education, training and learning targets

- to work with business, employees and their trade unions to support and develop skills in the workplace; and
- to build a qualifications system that is easily understood.

It is encouraging that work on many of these policy areas has already been put in train: the setting up of the UfI, Learning Direct and Individual Learning Accounts are examples. Legislation to implement the major structural changes that are involved is in progress with the passage through Parliament of the Learning and Skills Bill. All these initiatives are designed to extend the array of opportunities and support available for adults learning.

Learning for the twenty-first century, the first report of the Advisory Council (NAGCELL, (DFEE, 1998) argued the case for an inclusive view of lifelong learning to be high on the political agenda and proposed ways in which this might be achieved. From the perspective of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the national umbrella organisation working with a wide variety of groups and individuals involved in adult learning, a key research priority is to continue to map how inclusive the system is, what changes in participation are taking place over time, and to map the scale and variety of adult learning currently available.

Three years ago NIACE commissioned a survey, published as *The Learning Divide,* which was the fourth of a sequence of roughly comparable surveys carried out over a 20-year period, designed to look broadly at adult participation in education and training across the population as a whole. While the policy context has changed in the last three years, these changes are not yet felt on the ground, either by learners or providers. Since the previous questionnaire-based survey worked well and the report had been widely disseminated and used, it was decided that the present study should replicate, with very minor changes, the questionnaire used in 1996 by the Gallup Poll for *The Learning Divide* since benchmarking and obtaining comparable trend information now becomes a key goal.

It was not, however, possible to place the survey fieldwork with the same research agency, as they have since moved over to computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) which was considered unsuitable for the study because of the length and nature of the questionnaire. In addition, telephone ownership is lower among older people, more of whom are also deaf or hard of hearing.

Fieldwork was carried out at the same time of year as in 1990 and 1996. Using their regular Omnibus surveys, Research Surveys of Great Britain (RSGB) interviewed 5,054 adults aged 17 and over throughout the UK, between 27 January and 14 February 1999. The national sample for Wales was boosted to double its correct UK proportion in order to enable a separate set of tables for Wales to be produced, but the samples for each nation are shown in their correct proportions in this report. The detailed analyses were also carried out for NIACE by RSGB and copies of the full tabulations are available from NIACE on request for a small fee.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking John Kruk and his colleagues at RSGB for their unfailing help and efficiency in carrying out their work, and the European Social Fund for its financial support.

A description of previous surveys and their relationship with each other can be found in the final chapter.[1] It is evident that different studies have been constructed for somewhat different purposes and more is now understood about these differences and their respective values. They are increasingly seen to be complementary rather than in competition with each other.

The benefit of the high degree of stability shown between answers to the 1996 and 1999 surveys is that it demonstrates that the questionnaire is sound and that the large size of sample interviewed provides a reliable benchmark against which to measure change.

The headline findings of the 1999 survey have already been published in *Marking Time* (NIACE, 1999) to coincide with Adult Learners' Week in May 1999. This report contains more detailed analyses and commentary than was possible in that summary text, and focuses in particular on learning profiles distinguished by age, by employment status and by issues of social exclusion. The degree of stability between the 1996 and 1999 surveys is at first sight depressing. However, there is a serious difference between starting to make the policy case for lifelong learning to government, getting the policy case accepted by the current Government, having practical procedures for implementation put in place both nationally and locally, and convincing people to join in.

The critical issue to watch continues to be the current level of participation in education and training, and whether this is rising or falling and among what types of people. The inclusion of a new national target for participation in adult learning is to be welcomed and will further focus attention on this.

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[1] A further discussion of questionnaire methodologies utilised in national studies of participation in adult learning can be found in the *National Adult Learning Survey 1997* (DFEE Research report 49).

Current and recent participation in learning

The 1999 survey shows that there has been no overall change in the numbers of people currently or recently learning in the three years since the 1996 survey. Within this overall picture of stability in participation there are some marked shifts which will be considered in this section. Nearly one in four (22%) adults describe themselves as current learners, with two in five (40%) learning within the last three years. Table 1 shows the proportion of men and women who are currently learning (22%). Men are still slightly ahead of women (24% compared with 21%), but the gap is narrowing. There will continue to be a higher proportion of older women in the population as a whole, many of whom had more limited learning opportunities when they were young. At some stage in this millennium, the imbalance should correct itself!

Table 1: Participation in learning, men and women compared

	Total	Men	Women
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688
Current learning	22	24	21
Recent learning (in the last three years)	18	18	19
All current/recent learning	40	41	40
Past learning (more than three years ago)	23	25	21
None since leaving full-time education	37	34	40

Table 2 shows participation in learning by socio-economic class. Changes in the nature of the labour market and in work itself mean that the socio-economic class categories which have been in use in market and social research for some 40 years are having to be re-thought. Fortunately the decennial census due in 2001 has been the trigger for some development work on categorising social class and a new method of categorisation is being tested out for the future. For now, despite their limitations, they provide a convenient short-hand to describe different social groups.

The six categories are described briefly here, and a fuller description is provided in Appendix 2. Grade A includes the upper and upper-middle classes, about 3% of the total population, and is generally grouped with Grade B the middle class, some 10% of the total. Grade C1 includes the lower-middle class, often called white collar workers, and forms 24% of the population. This group, with the arrival of computing and the decline of manufacturing, is increasing in size. Grade C2 consists in the main of skilled manual workers and their families, some 30% of informants. Grade D comprises the semi-skilled and unskilled working class, some 25% of people. Grade E (8%) are those at the lowest level of subsistence, mainly old age pensioners and those dependent on social security schemes.

There remains a major divide between participation among the upper and middle socio-economic classes with over 50% of ABs and C1s recorded as current or recent learners compared with only one-third (36%) of C2s (skilled manual workers) and one quarter (24%) of unskilled workers and people on limited incomes (DE). The major change between 1996 and 1999 is an increase in participation of 5% among ABs and a smaller but encouraging increase of 3% among C2s.

Table 2: Participation in learning, by socio-economic class

	Total	AB	C1	C2	DE
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	914	1,398	1,121	1,620
Current learning	22	33	32	17	12
Recent learning (in last three years)	18	26	19	19	12
All current/recent learning	40	58	51	36	24
Past learning (more than three years ago)	23	25	25	25	18
None since full-time education	37	16	25	39	57

Policy priorities over the past two decades have mainly focused on people in employment or potentially employable. Entry and re-entry to employment and upskilling will continue to be a major national priority. With the decrease in unemployment, the labour market itself is changing rapidly, and the survey data confirms this, with increases in the proportion surveyed who are in full-time and part-time work, a reduction in the proportion who are unemployed but an increase in both those recorded as not working and as retired. The largest increase in learning between 1996 and 1999 is among those who are working part-time, from 42% to 50%, followed by those 'not working', from 23% to 30%. The main decrease is among the 'retired', from 20% to 16%.

Attitudes to retirement are changing, with many people retiring at an earlier age and while they are 'not working' in their previous sense of the word, they continue to engage in a variety of paid and unpaid activities. Definitions of national statistics have also been altered to remove from the 'unemployed' category those who are not actively seeking work and are not on the unemployment register.

Table 3: Participation in learning, by employment status

	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	1,957	617	249	749	1,273
Current learning	22	26	29	14	14	9
Recent learning	18	26	21	27	16	7
All current/recent learning	40	51	50	41	30	16
Past learning	23	22	20	19	22	30
None since full-time education	37	27	30	40	48	54

Terminal age of education has, historically, been an important predictor of adult learning and the age categories which have been used for analyses in previous surveys have tallied with major milestones in education for individuals: the legal school-leaving age and age of entry to university. The school-leaving age was raised to 16 in 1965 and the categories shown in Table 4 are therefore becoming less informative since all those who left school under 16 are now themselves middle-aged or elderly.

Table 4: Participation in learning, by terminal age of education

	Total	Under 16	16-17	18+
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	1,737	1,769	1,299
Current learning	22	9	21	31
Recent learning	18	10	21	27
All current/recent learning	40	19	42	58
Past learning	23	23	24	26
None since full-time education	37	58	34	16

Given the significant changes in post-school education and the numbers now staying on after the compulsory school-leaving age, both in schools and in sixth form and FE colleges, the 1999 data have been analysed into four groups: those who left aged 16 or under, those leaving at 17/18 and at 19/20 and those leaving at 21 or later.

As Table 5 shows, adding in those who left at 16 brings the proportion of those leaving as early as possible who were current/recent learners up from 19% to 28%. However, all the three other groups record over 50% as current/recent learners. This continues to show the key divide between those who leave school at the earliest opportunity and those who stay on even for a short time. It also shows that each year of initial education impacts on the likelihood to participate later.

Table 5: Participation in learning, by terminal age of education (revised age groups)

	Total	Up to 16	17-18	19-20	21+
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	3,130	781	207	688
Current learning	22	13	27	28	32
Recent learning	18	14	26	27	29
All current/recent learning	40	28	53	55	61
Past learning	23	23	26	26	26
None since full-time education	37	49	21	19	13

Regional and national diversity

Looking at adult learning across the constituent parts of the UK, there continue to be significant differences in participation between the four nations of the UK which are too great for comfort or to be explainable in any rational way. This indicates a tension between national planning and local responsibility for provision. While devolution is expected to bring benefits in that decisions will be taken closer to people, there is concern that all the nations may not give lifelong learning the same level of priority. In England, a similar concern arises from the proposals to place responsibility in the hands of local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), even though they will be under the overall co-ordination of the national Learning and Skills Council. The inheritance of the last two decades has been very uneven, with some areas benefiting for example from excellent TECs and further education colleges – while others have been less fortunate – and yet others for different reasons have shed their general adult education provision entirely. It will take time in some areas to reinstate the desirable breadth and variety of provision.

In 1996 England showed the highest proportion of current/recent learners (42%) and was 4 and 5 points ahead of Scotland and Wales respectively, and 14 points ahead of Northern Ireland. The 1999 survey shows Wales just ahead of England, 43% compared with 41%. Scotland shows a drop from 38% to 33% and Northern Ireland an increase from 28% to 32%. As always, it is necessary to remember the smaller sample sizes involved though, as noted earlier, the sample for Wales was boosted to double its size relative to the others.

Interest is increasing as to whether or not there are differences in participation between urban and rural areas and there has been an assumption that learners face greater barriers to learning in rural areas. Table 6 shows, perhaps surprisingly, that there is effectively no difference between the proportions who are current or recent learners in urban and rural areas: they are virtually identical to the UK proportions.

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Table 6: Participation in learning, by nation of the UK and rural/urban residence

	Total	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	Rural	Urban
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	4,217	143	442	252	853	4,202
Current learning	22	23	17	18	28	23	22
Recent learning	18	19	15	16	15	18	18
All current/recent learning	40	41	32	33	43	41	40
Past learning	23	23	23	24	23	24	23
None since full-time education	37	36	45	43	34	35	37

Table 7 shows participation for each of the English regions. East Midlands and East Anglia top the list with 48% of current/recent learners, followed by London (46%). Yorkshire and Humberside records 42%, followed by the North West (41%). The West Midlands are again at the bottom of the list (34%), but sharing this position with the North. These are both areas which have been badly hit by the decline in manufacturing industries, and the employment base has been slower to re-build, and, of course, the West Midlands faces yet more difficulties with the withdrawal of BMW. With the exception of East Anglia, the sample sizes are not small.

Table 7: Participation in learning, by English region

	Total	London	South East	South West	East Anglia	East Midlands	West Midlands	North West	Yorkshire/ Humberside	North
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	603	953	418	183	359	456	558	424	264
Current learning	22	26	23	23	27	27	16	20	23	17
Recent learning	18	20	19	15	20	21	18	21	18	17
All current/ recent learning	40	46	42	37	48	48	34	41	42	34
Past learning	23	18	23	23	25	18	26	24	23	23
None since full-time education	37	36	35	40	27	34	40	35	35	43

Participation in learning: trends over time

The stability of patterns of participation over the decade in respect of major social indicators is surprising. Looking at these patterns in detail does show some interesting changes, though more change took place in the early years of the decade than in the three years since the last survey in 1996. While recent years have seen an increased policy commitment to lifelong learning, the legislative and organisational arrangements to facilitate this are only now being put in place and their impact will not be felt among learners in the short term. Key demographic and occupational indicators against which it is interesting to compare trends over time are age, social class and region.

While a person's age is not normally felt by an individual to be a critical determinant of his or her learning or of their personal motivation to learn, it has typically been used as a major policy control on priorities for funding and provision. Historically education has been equated with schooling, and most discussion in politics and the media still focuses on schooling, even though it misleadingly continues to tend to describe it as 'education'.

While the academic debate over lifelong learning in the last two decades has continued to be quite lively, the interest in it did not translate to general financial or policy commitments in the 1980s, though there were advances on the training and vocational educational front which helped adults, led by the Manpower Services Commission and its related agencies. Continuing education over those years became coterminous with continuous professional development and government's focus was on work-related education and training rather than on a more generous view of adult learning. Funding streams tended mainly to favour the young, or those seeking outcomes closely related to the labour market.

As a result, age is probably the key way to understand the nature of demand and how it relates to current provision. It also offers easier options for effective age-discriminatory action, whether positive or negative.

Table 8 compares the proportions of each age group who are current/recent participants in learning in 1990, 1996 and 1999. Attention has focused in the 1990s on encouraging more young people to stay on in education post-16, and the effect of this shows up in the 17-19 age group, though there now is an apparent drop in this group between 1996 and 1999, perhaps due to an increase in the availability of jobs. There are encouraging increases in the proportion of current/recent learners in all the middle age groups, with increases of 4% and 5% between age groups 35 to 64. It is disappointing, however, that among the retired, the proportion of current/recent learners has dropped, by 3% among 65-74 year olds and by 6% among those 75 and over. The cutbacks in local adult education services in many areas, resulting from continuing Government pressure on local government finances through the 1990s, have undoubtedly affected access for older people, most notably in the London region following the demise of the Inner London Education Authority.

Table 8 also shows in brackets the proportion of each age-group who are in full-time education and the increase in people in the 20-24 age-group, both in 1996 and 1999. However, the table emphasises clearly the divide between people under 25 where substantial numbers study full-time and those aged 25 and over where full-time study is undertaken by only 1% or 2%. It is of course not just a matter of the availability of grants and fees which affects people's decision to study full- or part-time: many mature people would not wish to study full-time even if more full-time grants were available. As subsequent tables show, more support for part-time learners is also necessary.

Table 8: Current/recent learning by age: 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1990	1996	1999
	All current/recent and/or informal learners	Proportion which are current/recent learners	Proportion which are current/recent learners
Total respondents	39 (3)	40 (5)	40 (4)
17-19	63 (11)	86 (42)	81 (37)
20-24	66 (12)	65 (15)	70 (25)
25-34	46 (1)	48 (2)	50 (2)
35-44	43 (1)	43 (1)	47 (1)
45-54	35 (–)	36 (1)	41 (*)
55-64	23 (*)	25 (*)	30 (–)
65-74	15 (*)	19 (2)	16 (–)
75 & over		15	9 (–)

NB The proportion of full-time students in each group is shown in brackets. Percentages are horizontal.

Socio-economic class as an indicator of progress does not offer much encouragement. The largest increase in current/recent participation is 5% and that is among the upper and middle class groups (ABs). There is a modest increase since 1996, of 3%, among skilled manual workers (C2s) reversing a fall in the mid-1990s (Table 9). However, simply considering people who say they are current learners shows no increase at all over the decade among the upper and middle class groups and modest decreases of 4% among the skilled workers (C2s) and 3% among the unskilled workers (DEs) (Table 10). These downward trends are not encouraging.

Table 9: Current/recent learning by socio-economic class, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1990	1996	1999
	Proportion studying now/ recently and/or learning informally	Proportion who are current/recent learners	Proportion who are current/recent learners
Total sample	39	40	40
A/B	54	53	58
C1	50	52	51
C2	38	33	36
DE	25	26	24

NB Percentages are horizontal and the proportions include full-time students.

Table 10: Current learning by socio-economic class, 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1990	1996	1999
	Proportion who are current and/or informal learners	Proportion who are current learners	Proportion who are current learners
Total sample	23	23	22
AB	32	32	33
C1	31	32	32
C2	21	17	17
DE	15	12	12

NB Percentages are of the horizontal group and the proportions include full-time students.

Taking a broad look across the English regions and the nations of the UK continues to show patterns of regional variation which are difficult to explain. In comparison with 1990, participation in Greater London, the South East and East Anglia has increased, as has the North-West. However, participation in the North and Yorkshire/Humberside has decreased as it has in Scotland. Wales and Northern Ireland have both increased, by 6 and 4 points respectively. The East and West Midlands continue to present a contrasting picture to each other. At the beginning of the decade participation in the West Midlands was ten points higher than the East Midlands. The situation has now reversed with East Midlands continuing high at 48% and West Midlands one of the lowest, at 34%. The West Midlands faced major changes in the early 1990s with down-sizing in the car industry which in turn affected many other companies and their support for training. The withdrawal of BMW will affect the whole region and will require government action in job creation and retraining.

Table 11: Current/recent participation by region and nation: 1990, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1990	1996	1999
	% of current/recent and informal learners	% of current/recent learners	% of current/recent learners
Total sample	39	40	40
Greater London	40	44	46
South East	40	38	42
South West	43	37	37
East Anglia	39	43	48
East Midlands	37	50	48
West Midlands	46	35	34
Wales	37	37	43
North West	40	35	41
Yorkshire/Humberside	40	52	42
North	33	45	34
Scotland	22	38	33
Northern Ireland	Not surveyed	28	32

NB Percentages are of the horizontal group.

Future intentions to take up learning

All respondents were asked how likely they were to take up learning in the next three years. Table 12 compares those who say they are very or fairly likely to learn in the next three years in 1996 and 1999, and while the proportion who are very or fairly likely to learn remains the same at 38%, there is a small switch of 2% from 'fairly likely' up to 'very likely'. The detail of this shows in a 5% increase among the ABs and 2% each in the C1s and C2s. At the same time there appears a hardening of attitude among the most disadvantaged group of DEs who are 'very unlikely to learn' which increases from 54% to 61%.

Table 12: Future intentions to take up learning, by socio-economic class, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1999					1996				
	Total	**AB**	**C1**	**C2**	**DE**	**Total**	**AB**	**C1**	**C2**	**DE**
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	914	1,398	1,121	1,620	4,673	963	1,262	1,089	1,358
Very likely	22	31	28	18	14	20	26	26	16	14
Fairly likely	16	19	18	16	13	18	20	19	18	14
Total 'likely'	38	50	46	34	27	38	46	45	34	28
Fairly unlikely	12	14	14	14	9	9	11	9	9	9
Very unlikely	47	34	38	48	61	46	37	40	50	54
Total 'unlikely'	59	48	52	62	70	55	48	49	59	63
Don't know	3	2	3	3	3	7	6	6	7	8

A follow-up to the *National Adult Learning Survey* (NALS, 1997), commissioned by the DfEE from the National Centre for Social Research (La Valle and Finch, 1999), provides an interesting perspective on future learning intentions. Whilst the divisions between participation among groups with different levels of education qualifications, socio-economic groups, age and gender all resemble those mapped here and in the NIACE sequence of surveys, the NCSR follow-up study in which 1,000 respondents were interviewed 18 months later, allows learners and non-learners to be tracked over a longer time-period.

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In the NCSR surveys the same proportion (56%) of respondents had reported some recent learning in both surveys and two thirds of these predicted future learning. However, in the 18 months period, 28% of non-learners had become "new" learners, and nearly half of these "new" learners also predicted future learning.

On the negative side, 19% had done no learning at either survey and 17% of the original learners had not done any more learning since then. On the positive side, while 8% had become learners after a long learning break, the authors also note that a long learning break appears to be a hindrance to further learning.

Table 13 confirms the scale of the negative group in relation to their past learning. Fifty-four per cent of past learners are 'very unlikely' to learn in the next three years and the figure rises to 77% among those who have not learned since their full-time education.
This proportion is effectively the reverse of the 76% of current learners who are very or fairly likely to learn in the next three years.

Table 13: Future intentions to take up learning, by gender and learning status

	Total	Men	Women	Current learners	Recent learners	Past learners	None since full-time
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	1,125	919	1,148	1,815
Very likely	22	22	21	59	30	8	4
Fairly likely	16	15	17	18	30	17	8
Total likely	38	38	38	76	60	25	12
Fairly unlikely	12	14	11	8	15	19	10
Very unlikely	47	46	48	12	22	54	77
Total unlikely	59	59	59	20	37	72	87
Don't know	3	3	3	4	4	2	2

The other important factor affecting future learning intentions is, of course, employment status (Table 14). At the extreme end, 80% of those who are retired say that they are very unlikely to learn in the next three years. Of those who are currently employed full-time, 47% are very likely or fairly likely to learn in the next three years. This rises to 50% among those who are now unemployed. Part-time workers also rank high at 45%. What is interesting is the group who describe themselves as 'not working'. While some of them will be engaged in child or elder care, others are likely to have taken early retirement or to have been otherwise taken off the unemployment register, but are by no means retired. Thirty-nine per cent of those 'not working' say they are 'very likely or likely to learn' in the next three years.

Table 14: Future intentions to take up learning, by employment status

	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	1,957	617	249	749	1,273
Very likely	22	26	27	27	20	6
Fairly likely	16	20	18	23	19	5
Total likely	38	47	45	50	39	11
Fairly unlikely	12	16	14	11	10	7
Very unlikely	47	34	37	36	47	80
Total unlikely	59	50	51	47	57	87
Don't know	3	3	4	3	3	2

Putting the message of both sets of surveys together confirms the importance of current participation for continuing and further learning. While there is a hard-core of non-learners, the evidence from NCSR that there is a substantial group who move from being non-learners to learners is encouraging. How this group distributes itself, and their pathways over longer time periods, is a subject for further work, as Chapter 18 discusses.

Subjects of current or recent learning

This section of the report focuses on the current and recent learning that people are and have been engaged in within the last three years. The survey question that has been developed over the sequence of surveys described earlier has been drafted as broadly as possible to include all types of learning in any location and in any mode. It is a question asked of individuals themselves, not in terms of levels or providers, and allows the respondent to define what subjects they have been studying.

I would now like to talk about the sort of learning that people do. Learning can mean practising, studying, or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. You can do it regularly (each day or month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full-time or part-time, done at home, at work or in another place like college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. I am interested in any learning you have done, whether or not it is finished. Which of the following statements most applies to you?

I AM CURRENTLY DOING SOME LEARNING ACTIVITY NOW
I HAVE DONE SOME LEARNING ACTIVITY IN THE LAST THREE YEARS
I HAVE STUDIED/LEARNT BUT IT WAS OVER THREE YEARS AGO
I HAVE NOT STUDIED OR LEARNT SINCE I LEFT FULL-TIME EDUCATION

Unlike the NALS survey (1997), which continues with a number of sub-questions to prompt and probe for more detailed responses and elicits more descriptions of shorter episodes, the effect of offering the overall question to the learner and leaving the decision as to what constitutes their learning to them, appears to produce fewer but longer episodes of learning, more of which are aiming for qualifications and may be less currently work-related in the short term.

Those who describe themselves as currently learning or as having learnt in the last three years are then asked what subjects they were learning about, or had most recently learnt about. The wide variety of subjects recorded continues to make their categorisation a challenge, and it therefore seems sensible to continue to provide an extended list of subjects rather than to lose information through an over-artificial attempt at grouping them. It certainly provides an overall view of the range of subject demand as far as the learners are concerned. An additional complication is that the formal provision of vertically integrated courses is increasingly being broken down with the move to modular courses and accumulation and transferability of credit. Many adults will choose to learn a particular subject at whatever level is appropriate for them, and through whichever way or mode is most convenient. They may continue to study the same subject over a long time period, taking several different courses in it or taking the same course repeatedly. At the same time, developments in the use of technology-based learning resources are rapidly leading to the provision of learning in smaller bite-sized pieces – granularity is the term now used for this by the computer industry.

Table 15 provides a basic functional list in alphabetical order of both the main subject of learning and of all subjects being studied, analysed against the home countries of the UK. It should be noted that the base numbers for Northern Ireland[1], though in correct proportion to those for the rest of the UK, are small. For the current survey, the sample interviewed in Wales was boosted to double the normal proportion and reweighted for this report. See Appendix 4 for details.

As with the overall pattern of participation, the 1999 subjects of study show a very similar picture to those recorded in 1996. The only big difference is an increase from 17% to 25% in those naming computer studies/ICT. Three subject areas appear to have decreased in take-up: social sciences from 6% to 3%, business/management from12% to 10% and other professional qualifications from 11% to 7%. Two other subjects have increased their take-up, and that only by 2%: nursing and health studies from 8% to 10% and creative arts from 3% to 5%. It is important to remember that while these percentages are small, they do represent very large numbers of learners.

Priorities and resources are likely to vary between the four nations and differences in priorities may start to emerge more strongly after devolution. Wales has the highest proportion studying computing (29%), followed by business/management (11%) other professional qualifications (10%), other 'leisure' subjects (9%) and nursing and other vocational subjects, (both 8%). In Northern Ireland, the pattern of studies appears somewhat more traditional: business/ management (21%) is the runner-up to computers/ICT (23%) followed by 'other academic subjects' (15%), nursing/health studies (12%) and short-hand/typing/office training (8%). Maybe the academic/vocational divide is stronger in Northern Ireland: it is interesting to note that Northern Ireland still has the 11+. Scotland has the same proportion as Northern Ireland studying computers/ICT (23%), followed by 13% studying business/management. Scotland is also highest both for other professional and vocational qualifications, at 10%, and is also highest for engineering (7%) and for law and English language/literature, both at 5%.

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[1] The sample interviewed in Northern Ireland in 1996 was boosted to 500 interviews and re-weighted for this report.

Table 15: Main subject and all subjects of study, by nations of the UK (in alphabetical order)

	1996	1999					
	All subjects	Main subject	All subjects	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	1,892	2,044	2,044	1,744	46	147	108
Accountancy	4	2	4	4	–	4	5
Basic reading/writing/ literacy	1	*	*	*	–	1	1
Basic maths/numeracy	2	*	1	*	4	2	3
Building trades	1	1	1	1	4	1	1
Business/admin/management	12	7	10	9	21	13	11
Car maintenance	1	*	1	1	2	1	3
Carpentry/DIY	1	1	1	3	–	3	3
Computer studies	17	19	25	24	23	23	29
Cookery/catering	3	2	3	2	1	3	6
Dance	1	*	1	1	–	–	–
Dressmaking/ tailoring/ needlework	1	1	1	1	2	*	3
Driving (inc. HGV)	NSR	1	1	1	–	1	6
English as a second language	*	*	1	1	–	–	1
English as a foreign language	*	*	1	1	–	1	2
English language/ literature	4	2	4	4	3	5	2
Engineering	4	4	4	4	4	7	6
Foreign languages	8	4	7	7	4	6	7
Gardening/horticulture	1	1	2	1	–	1	5
Handicrafts	2	1	1	1	–	1	3
History/local history	4	2	3	3	2	2	5
Law	3	1	2	2	–	5	2
Music	3	2	2	3	–	1	4
Nursing/first-aid/health studies	8	7	10	10	12	6	8
Creative arts: painting/pottery/ sculpture/design	3	3	5	5	3	3	6
Photography	1	*	1	1	–	2	3
Religion/bible studies/theology	2	1	2	2	1	–	12

Science/maths/ statistics	4	2	5	5	2	4	4
Shorthand/typing/office training	2	1	1	1	8	2	1
Social sciences	6	1	3	3	5	3	3
Social work/social services/ community care	4	2	3	3	6	2	2
Sports/ gymnastics/keep-fit	3	1	3	3	2	2	6
Welsh language	NSR	*	*	*	–	–	5
Other professional qualifications	9	10	9	9	2	10	8
Other vocational qualifications	9	10	9	9	2	10	8
Other academic subjects	7	8	7	7	15	9	4
Other leisure subjects	6	6	7	7	9	6	9
Don't know/can't remember	1	2	1	1	–	–	1

* subjects over 1% only listed, those 4% or over appear in bold

Table 16 covers the same ground, but summarises the main groupings of *all* subjects studied, again analysed by the four nations, but providing a more manageable set of groupings to handle.

Table 16: All subjects of study – summary of main groupings by nations of the UK

	All	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	1,744	46	147	108
Computer studies	25	24	23	23	29
Business/administration/management	10	9	21	13	11
Nursing/health studies	10	10	12	6	8
Foreign languages	7	7	4	6	7
Creative arts including photography	6	6	3	5	10
Social sciences/social work/community care	6	6	11	5	6
Science/maths/statistics	5	5	2	4	4
Engineering	4	4	4	7	6
English language/literature*	4	4	3	5	2
Other vocational qualifications	9	9	2	10	8
Other academic subjects	7	7	15	9	4
Other leisure subjects	7	7	9	6	9
Other professional qualifications	7	6	6	10	10

* An additional 1% specified English as a foreign language or as a second language.

Table 17: Main subject of current/recent study, by gender, main reason for study and future plans for learning

	All	Men	Women	Job-related	Personal Development	Education/ progression	Other	Aiming for qualification	Not aiming for qualification
Base: all current/ recent learners = 100%	2,044	980	1,064	968	719	232	126	1,193	745
Computer studies/ICT	19	21	17	21	17	13	16	14	26
Other vocational qualifications	10	9	10	14	6	9	6	10	8
Nursing/health studies	7	2	12	9	5	5	7	8	5
Business/ management	7	8	5	8	3	12	6	8	4
(Other) academic subjects	8	8	8	8	6	12	12	11	4
Other professional qualifications	6	8	5	9	3	7	1	8	4
(Other) leisure subjects	6	5	7	4	9	3	13	4	8
Foreign languages	4	4	4	1	8	1	11	1	8
excluding Welsh									
Art: painting/pottery/ design/photography/ sculpture	4	3	4	2	7	3	2	4	4
Engineering	4	8	*	5	2	4	2	4	3
Accountancy	2	2	2	3	1	4	–	3	1
English language/ literature	2	1	3	1	3	5	1	2	1
Science/maths/ statistics	2	2	2	1	3	5	–	3	1
Social work/ community care	2	1	3	2	2	3	1		22
Cookery/catering	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
History/local history	2	2	1	*	4	2	1	1	3
Music	2	2	1	*	3	2	–	1	2

* subjects over 1% only listed

Table 17 focuses on the main subject of study and relates it to more personal factors: the difference between men and women's choice of subjects, whether subjects are studied for work-related, personal development or education progression reasons, and whether study is aiming at a qualification or not. Men choose to learn computer studies/ICT more than women (21% compared to 17%) and similarly choose business/management (8% compared to 5%) and engineering (8% compared to less than 0.5%). The situation is, not surprisingly, reversed with nursing (12% of women compared to 2% of men). Fewer gender differences show up in the

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main subject being studied than when all subjects are included; there are, for example 2% more women than men studying English, social work/care and other leisure subjects.

Studies which are more motivated by work-related reasons are computer studies (21%), nursing (9%), business/management (8%), other vocational (14%) and professional (9%) qualifications. Studies which rank higher for education/ progression reasons also include computer studies (13%), business/management (12%) but education/progression motives also include 'other academic' subjects (12%), other vocational subjects (9%) and other professional qualifications (7%), science/maths/statistics (5%), English (5%), engineering (4%).

Computing/ICT appears to be motivating to people across the board. Seventeen per cent of those studying for personal development are studying computing. Of those who are not aiming for a qualification, 26% are studying computing. Of those who are aiming for a qualification for their studies, 14% are studying computing, 8% are studying business/management, 8% nursing/health studies, 11% other academic subjects, 10% other vocational qualifications and 8% other professional qualifications.

The importance of computing skills can not be underestimated and while the proportion studying computers already whatever their age or motive is encouraging, there are estimated to be 13 million adults who do not yet have any ICT skills. The evidence discussed in Chapter 17 confirms the danger of a divide between men and women and younger and older people.

Patterns of subject choice in relation to age and employment status

People's interest in learning in general will vary over their life-span, and their interest in particular subject areas will also vary, as will their own needs. It is no longer as necessary to argue the basic case for 'education as a process continuing throughout life' as it was 20 years ago, though its provision is not yet as seamlessly available as might be wished. Despite this, some types of education continue to be seen as more desirable and worthy of financial support than others and funding streams have been designed and designated to support some types and not others: Schedule 2 courses under the FEFC is a classic example. The proposal to remove the Schedule 2 distinction under the new legislation is greatly to be welcomed. Schedule 2 lists the type of courses to be funded by the FEFC which are mainly academic and vocational, and basic skills. Other, mainly uncertificated, provision was treated less well, funded by LEAs from budgets under pressure throughout the 1990s. The conventional belief has been that employers only will and only should support work-related study. However, there is growing evidence, notably from the increasing number of employee development schemes, that employers also benefit from the general learning that their employees choose to do voluntarily in their own time (Thomson, 1999).

Often the issue is not clear-cut. If courses are put on by education providers, the practical decision about whether the course is vocational or non-vocational rests with the learner rather than with the provider. Recent policy which has emphasised accreditation has meant that many adults have been forced to go through certification procedures in order that the providing institution can pull down the appropriate units of funding. This has undoubtedly had a damaging affect on demand in some areas of provision and has also had a distorting effect on the content of courses on offer. It is to be hoped that the move towards funding learners, which is implicit in 'individual learning accounts', combined with the development of the Learning and Skills Councils will combine to overcome these artificially constructed barriers.

Tables 18 and 19 provide an indication of the interaction of age, employment status and subjects of study. One story line which emerges from Table 18 is that more younger people are already likely to have had a good foundation in computing from their initial education, while people in mid-to-late career must both catch up and keep up. Evidently some subjects are more work-related than others and some, of course, are already framed as vocational and professional qualifications. Some subjects are clearly studied more by younger age-groups effectively as part of their initial education: business studies, science/maths, creative arts, English and other academic subjects. There are also clear indications of people in their middle years moving into some subject areas; for example 10% of learners are studying nursing in each of the age-groups from 25 to 55. There is a similar group of over 10% studying vocational qualifications in the 35 and 45 age-group. At the top end of the age-range while computing holds its own among 65-74 year-olds, it is joined by foreign languages (15%), creative arts (14%) and other leisure subjects (13%).

Table 18: All subjects of current/recent study (rating 4% or over), by age

	All	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all current/ recent learners = 100%	2,044	191	255	488	432	350	202	104	33
Computer studies	25	14	14	24	29	33	31	21	7
Business/administration/ management	10	19	17	11	8	8	5	*	–
Nursing/health studies	10	8	6	10	10	11	10	8	4
Foreign languages	7	8	3	4	6	8	9	15	27
Creative arts including photography	6	10	7	4	6	5	5	14	12
Social sciences/social work/ community care	6	8	9	6	5	4	5	3	9
Science/maths/statistics	5	13	10	3	4	2	3	3	–
Engineering	4	3	4	7	4	3	3	1	–
English language/literature	4	11	5	3	3	3	2	2	4
Other vocational qualifications	9	8	5	9	13	10	8	*	10
Other academic subjects	7	10	10	7	6	8	6	5	3
Other leisure subjects	7	11	5	4	5	8	11	13	6
Other professional qualifications	7	3	8	9	8	6	4	4	4

Patterns of employment have been changing dramatically over the last decade and employment status interacts with age and gender in a number of ways. An important difference between 1996 and 1999 is that significant numbers of people have moved back into paid employment, though some people, particularly many women, have moved into part-time employment. There is a sizeable group who are not currently working, some whom are housewives or carers and some who, as noted earlier, may have taken early retirement but are not job-seekers, and define themselves as 'not working'. This will partly be due to the changes in the unemployment and job-seekers' regulations. Many such people are still engaged in some form of employment or voluntary activity and form an interesting group, which cuts across the typical generational analysis.

Table 19: All subjects of current/recent study, by employment status – summary of main groupings over 2%

	All	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired	Student
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	1,007	306	103	224	203	202
Computer studies/ICT	25	26	22	29	26	24	19
Business/administration/ management	10	12	10	10	5	2	12
Nursing/health studies	10	10	14	6	9	5	8
Foreign languages	7	5	5	8	6	18	4
Creative arts incl. photography	6	4	7	8	7	11	13
Science/maths/statistics	5	3	5	1	6	2	16
Engineering	4	7	*	1	1	2	4
English language/ literature	4	1	5	4	8	3	9
Social work/services/ community care	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
Social sciences	3	2	3	2	4	2	7
Other vocational qualifications	9	10	10	12	7	4	4
Other academic subjects	7	7	8	8	7	4	13
Other leisure subjects	7	6	7	6	10	10	6
Other professional qualifications	7	10	6	3	2	4	5

The motivation to study among unemployed people is clearly work-related, with nearly one-third studying computing (29%) followed by 12% learning other vocational subjects, and 10% doing business studies/administration, 10% studying other professional qualifications and 7% studying engineering. Computing also figures highest among both full-time workers and those not working (at 26%) and those who are retired (24%). The pattern differs among full-time and part-time students. Full-time students, often pursuing their initial education, are studying a broader range of subjects: 16% are studying science/maths/statistics, 13% creative arts, 13% other academic subjects, 12% business/management, 9% English language/literature, 8% nursing studies, 7% social sciences and 7% other professional qualifications.

Fewer part-time workers, a group which includes more women, study computing (22%): more study nursing (14%), business administration/management (10%) other vocational qualifications (10%), other academic subjects (8%) and creative arts (7%). People 'not working' choose from a wider range of subjects: apart from computing, the highest group is 'other leisure subjects' (10%) followed by nursing/health studies (9%), English literature/language (8%), creative arts, other vocational qualifications and other academic qualifications, all at 7%.

Reasons for choosing the main subject of current/recent learning

The general pattern of reasons given for studying people's main subject of study is fairly gender-free in relation to specific reasons. Looking at the summary lines shown in bold in Table 20, 6% more women than men give reasons related to personal development and slightly more women than men (by 2%) give reasons of education progression. This balances the larger proportion of men (9% more) that give work-related reasons. The single most important reason for women is 'to develop themselves as a person'. For men there is a cluster of instrumental reasons related to their current work.

Motivation has far more to do with the age of the learner than their gender, and as noted earlier reasons for choosing particular subjects are often, but not always work-related. The intrinsic interest of the subject is more important at both ends of the age-spectrum. One in five of the two youngest age-groups have chosen their subject out of interest. This proportion drops a few points in early adulthood and then increases in the middle and later years to a third among 55-64s and to over one-half of people aged 65 and over. 'To obtain a qualification' is the largest group among the 17-19-year-olds (25%), is still a sizeable group of 20-24-year-olds (14%) and as many as 11% of 25-34-year-olds. Similarly it is the two youngest age-groups whose motivation is 'to get a job': 23% of 17-19s and 26% of 20-24-year-olds. 'To help in one's current job' is a complementary main reason for all in their middle years. More specific work-related reasons stand out at particular ages. Ten per cent of 25-34-year-olds are studying to gain promotion compared with 5% overall. Seven per cent of 35-44-year-olds want to change the type of work they do compared with 4% overall, and similarly, 7% of that age-group compared with 4% overall want to learn to make their work more satisfying. As many as 6% of 45-54-year-olds and 5% of 55-64-year-olds had no choice and were learning subjects their employers had chosen.

Table 20: Reason for choosing subject of main learning

	All	Men	Women	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	980	1,064	191	224	488	432	350	202	104	33
Interested in the subject	23	23	22	22	21	17	17	24	30	49	56
To develop myself as a person	8	6	10	3	2	8	12	9	9	12	5
I enjoy learning and study	4	3	4	4	3	3	2	4	7	8	15
To meet people	1	1	1	*	2	*	1	1	1	4	–
All giving personal development reasons	35	32	38	29	27	28	31	36	48	73	75
To get a recognised qualification	9	9	10	25	14	11	6	6	2	*	–
To help me get on a future course	2	1	3	7	3	2	2	1	–	–	–
All giving education/ progression reasons	11	10	13	32	17	13	8	7	2	*	–
To get a job	10	10	10	23	26	11	5	4	5	–	–
To help me in my current job	17	19	16	2	11	18	24	24	20	4	–
To change the type of work I do	4	5	3	*	2	4	7	4	4	1	–
To gain a promotion	5	7	4	3	5	10	5	5	1	–	–
To make my work more satisfying	4	4	5	2	3	3	7	4	5	4	–
To gain a rise in earnings	2	3	1	–	3	3	3	1	2	–	–
To get a job with a different employer	1	1	1	*	1	2	1	2	1	1	–
Had no choice – employer chose	3	4	3	1	2	5	3	6	5	–	–
Had no choice – benefit requirement	1	*	1	1	1	*	1	1	*	–	4
All giving work related reasons	47	52	43	32	54	56	66	49	43	10	–
Other reasons	5	4	5	4	1	2	5	6	5	14	21

Source of information about main current/recent learning

Issues of information, advice and guidance become more important as people enter and re-enter learning opportunities and are offered a multiplicity of possible options and methods of study from which to choose. It is increasingly assumed that new communications technologies will play a major role in the provision of information and advice. Telephone helplines utilised for several years in conjunction with Adult Learners' Weeks have already demonstrated their worth and made the case for the establishment of the national information and guidance helpline **Learning Direct**, which in turn is to become integrated into the University for Industry (UfI), under its new brand name **learndirect**. The value of the helpline is demonstrated by the fact that in less than two years a million calls to Learning Direct were received by February 2000.

In 1996, one-quarter (25%) of all learners described the source of the information about their learning as workplace-originated. The 1999 survey still records the employer/training officer as the dominant source of information about their learning, both for women and for men, though 28% of men note it compared with 21% of women, and 22% overall. Workmates are separately recorded in 1999 and are specifically mentioned by 7%. The workplace dominates as the source of information for all ages from 25 to 64. The careers service is mentioned only by 2% of people overall, dropping from 3% in 1996, with only 8% of the 17-19s specifying it. Similarly, job centres/the employment service are only mentioned by 2% overall, though the proportion rises to 7% among DEs.

Schools and colleges, and to a lesser extent universities, continue to be the dominant source of information for young people. There is increasing evidence that further education is establishing itself as the major information provider, not just for younger people, with 13% overall quoting FE as its source of information compared with 8% mentioning universities, 3% only mentioning adult education centres and 2% libraries. Of course, many local authorities have not been able to maintain a separate adult education service and much of such work has been integrated with that of local colleges. It is encouraging that 11% of 65-74s quote FE as their source of information. Similarly libraries have been under severe pressure, reducing opening hours and even closing branches. However, as Table 21 shows, libraries and local adult education centres are particularly important sources of information for older people and it is to be hoped that Lifelong Learning Partnerships and local Lifelong Learning Development Plans will support their continued role.

The importance of friends and family (12% overall) continues to be significant across all age-groups and 'word of mouth' is particularly valuable in reaching older people and in reaching manual workers (DEs). Print in its various formats also plays a useful though quiet role, with 6% noting newspaper adverts, and a further 6% referring to printed publicity of some sort or other. It is vital that in the haste to take on the newer technologies the benefit of the existing ones are not forgotten as they may continue to be more accessible to many people for a long time to come.

Table 21: Source of information about main current/recent learning*

	All	Men	Women	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	980	1,064	191	224	488	432	350	202	104	33
Work/employer/ training officer	25	28	21	4	15	34	28	33	25	5	4
Further education/ technical college	13	11	15	33	24	13	10	6	5	11	4
Family/friends	12	12	13	10	15	11	10	11	15	24	31
University/college of HE	8	8	8	9	21	8	5	7	3	3	6
Workmates	7	8	5	4	3	7	12	6	4	2	–
School	6	5	7	36	10	4	2	2	3	1	4
Newspaper advert	6	5	7	1	3	6	8	6	8	15	6
Adult education centre/ evening institute	3	2	3	–	1	2	3	4	5	3	15
Printed publicity delivered to home	3	2	3	1	2	4	3	2	4	4	–
Printed publicity elsewhere	3	2	4	–	3	3	5	2	1	4	5
Library	2	2	3	1	1	2	2	1	3	5	11
Job Centre	2	3	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	–	–
Trade Union/ professional association	2	2	1	–	*	1	3	3	3	·	–
Careers service/ guidance service	2	1	2	8	2	1	2	–	1	–	–

* Sources over 1% only listed.

Despite the very small numbers mentioning new communications technologies as their source of information, the key ones have all been individually recorded in order to provide a benchmark against which to measure future developments: just 1% quote their source as the Internet/World Wide Web, 1% quote television and less than 1% mention a telephone helpline.

These low figures demonstrate the scale of the challenge for Learning Direct if it is to act as the major source of information and guidance for the UfI.

Chapter 17, *The Information Divide*, will look at access to ICT in more detail in relation to different groups of people.

There continue to be marked differences between the four home countries in their use of or access to information about subjects of learning, as Table 22 shows. Scotland, as in 1996, ranks the employer/workplace highest (27%) and Northern Ireland ranks it lowest (13%). Friends/family, ie 'word-of mouth', continues to be the main source in Northern Ireland (now 26%), and higher than for any other nation. This links well with Field's (1999) findings that family/friends are major influences in Northern Ireland on continuing participation. Northern Ireland also uses the less formal mechanism of newspaper advertisements more (12%). School has dropped as a source of information across all the nations, being overtaken by further education.

It is clear that most people still have a very limited view of the range of sources of information available, and appear to work from social and cultural habit and expectations. The main ways in the education, training and employment systems can be used to provide information and advice need to be promoted and understood more widely. These can then be complemented by the innovatory outlets, such as shops and pubs which are increasingly being tried and found useful. The implication of this is that demand may be stimulated by a stable supply of range, quality and volume of provision.

For older and less mobile people, information available in locally accessible places such as libraries and community centres will continue to be important. The inclusion of leaflets with information about Learning Direct in social security payment slips during Adult Learners' Week has also proved effective. It is also necessary for such sites to be able to provide competent and independent advice on locally available opportunities. It has been suggested that it is desirable that adults should be within a mile of a local learning centre. This is probably over-idealistic. *Changing learners, changing technologies* (NAGCELL, 1998), for example, suggested that people should be able to reach their local learning centre within 45 minutes by public transport.

Table 22: Source of information about main current/recent learning*, by nation of the United Kingdom

	1996	1999				
		UK	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	1,892	2,044	1,744	108	147	46
Work/employer/training officer	22	25	25	22	27	13
Further education college/technical college	6	13	14	11	8	11
Friends/family	15	12	12	15	11	26
University/college of HE	10	8	8	4	11	8
Workmates	NSR	7	6	4	13	4
School	10	6	6	7	8	8
Newspaper advertisement	7	6	6	4	5	12
Adult education centre	5	3	3	5	2	6
Printed publicity delivered to home	3	3	3	4	1	–
Printed publicity elsewhere	3	3	3	4	2	5
Library	3	2	2	4	1	2
Job Centre/employment service	3	2	2	4	1	8
Trade Union/professional association	NSR	2	2	1	1	–
Careers/guidance service	3	2	1	3	3	3

*Sources over 1% only listed.

The main location of learning of current/recent learners

The policies and structures of educational provision have historically been driven by the needs of specific age and target groups: schooling, the 16-19-year-olds and universities are clear examples, and there has been little choice as to the location of study which has been determined by the type of chosen provider identified. With the widening of lifelong learning opportunities and the additional choice offered by open and distance learning and new technologies, people of different ages will choose to learn in different places partly by choice and partly as a consequence of the policy priorities of educational planners and funders. Further education colleges are reported as the main place of learning overall (20%), followed by learning where people work (18%) and universities/higher education (18%). However, the workplace is the most important place of learning for all age-groups aged from 25 to 64.

Further education colleges are the main place of learning for 17-19-year-olds (46%) and 20-24-year-olds (22%). As is to be expected, these proportions reverse for higher education, with 26% of 17-19-year-olds and 48% of 20-24-year-olds studying through higher education institutions. Further education continues as an important provider for between 13% and 18% of all other age-groups, while the use of universities reduces to 12% and under for all aged 35 and over. Adult education centres are increasingly important as a place of learning from 25 and over, reaching 10% among those aged 45 and over, as are community/leisure centres which are the place of learning for 14% of those aged 65 and over.

Comparing the 1996 and 1999 surveys (Table 24) shows a small increase in the overall proportion of people learning at work, from 15% in 1996 to 18% in 1999 as well as increases from 3% to 5% in both those learning in an employer's training centre or at another training/conference centre thus bringing work-sponsored places to 28% overall, but with again the typical difference of 32% for men and only 23% for women. The highest proportion of men (21%) are learning at work compared with 15% of women, while the highest proportion of women are learning at a further education college (23%) compared with men (17%). There is an apparent small decrease in people learning through higher education, from 21% to 18%. However, it appears from the relative scale of the answers that there may have been some confusion in the 1996 survey in describing the place of learning as between colleges and universities, and it is possible that some people in 1996 mistakenly used the College of Higher Education category instead of College of Further Education. Anyone who has heard adult education described as 'night school', a term that went out of use by institutions before the Second World War, will recognise that popular language sometimes lags behind institutional reorganisation. It is hoped that the 1999 survey description is clearer.

Table 23: Main location of current/recent learning, by age

	All	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all respondents = 100%	2,044	191	244	488	432	350	202	104	33
Further Education College/ Tertiary/6th Form College	20	46	22	18	18	16	13	17	13
Where I work	18	6	12	21	24	21	20	3	–
University/College of HE/ Open University	18	26	48	19	12	9	7	3	3
Adult Education Centre/ Evening Institute	8	4	4	8	8	10	12	12	8
Private training centre	5	1	2	7	5	6	3	4	–
Employer's training centre	5	1	1	5	6	7	4	1	–
Community centre/ leisure centre	3	–	1	2	2	2	4	14	14
School	3	12	2	1	2	*	2	6	3
Skill centre	1	1	*	1	1	2	2	1	–
Voluntary organisation	1	–	–	*	1	*	–	–	–
At home – informal learning	10	1	2	7	10	12	16	21	37
At home – using a computer, CD ROM, internet	1	–	–	2	1	2	2	2	3
At home – from TV/radio	1	–	–	2	2	1	1	–	4
Other educational institution	1	–	2	*	1	3	*	–	–
Other	4	2	2	2	4	6	5	8	10

*Sources over 1% only listed.

More women (10%) than men (6%) study at adult education centres and community centres (4% of women compared with 2% of men) (Table 24). The same proportion in 1999 say they engage in informal learning at home (10%), but there is a decrease of 3%, from 5% to 2%, in those learning at home from a structured correspondence course or distance learning. As earlier, an additional option was added to the answers to act as a benchmark for change in technology-based learning with the result that 1% recorded learning at home from a computer CD/Rom.

The assumption behind the focus on further education as a means of widening participation is that it reaches further down the social scale to those with less educational advantage. The survey shows that of unskilled manual workers, the highest proportion (26%) do quote further education colleges as their place of learning, followed by 16% learning through higher education. This compares with 22% of skilled manual workers studying through further education, 9% only studying through higher education and 10% learning at an adult education centre or evening institute. White-collar workers (C1s) in educational institutions are most likely to be in higher education (24%) followed by further education (19%). At the top end, ABs are spread fairly equally between colleges (15%) and HE (17%). The social class undertaking most learning at work is the skilled working-class (23%) followed by ABs (19%) and C1s (18%).

Table 24: Main location of current/recent learning, by gender, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1996	1999		
		All	Men	Women
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	1,892	2,044	980	1,064
Further education college/technical college	19	20	17	23
Where I work	15	18	21	15
University/College of HE/Open University	21	18	18	17
Adult education centre/evening institute	9	8	6	10
Private training centre/hotel/conference centre	3	5	6	4
Employer's training centre	3	5	5	4
Community centre/leisure	2	3	2	4
School	NSR	3	2	3
Skills Centre/job centre/club	1	1	1	1
Voluntary organisation including trade union, WI, WEA, church	1	1	*	2
At home – informal learning/from book	10	10	11	9
At home – structured correspondence course or open learning	5	2	2	2
At home – using a computer/CD ROM	NSR	1	2	1
At home – from TV/radio	1	1	1	1
Other educational institution	3	1	1	1
Other places	6	4	4	3

*Sources over 1% only listed.

There is no straightforward relationship between the reasons given for study and the choice of place of learning as Table 25 also shows. Of those who give job-related reasons for learning, nearly one-third (30%) are learning at work, 19% are learning in further education, 15% are learning in higher education and 14% in an employer's or private training centre. However, ten per cent of those who are studying at work are doing it to achieve educational qualifications or educational progression. Twenty-one per cent of those studying for personal development are doing this through a FE college, as are 17% of those studying through higher education.

Table 25: Main location of learning, by socio-economic group and all giving specified reasons for learning

	All	AB	C1	C2	DE	Job-related reasons	Personal development	Educational progression
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	534	706	410	394	968	719	232
Further education college/ technical college	20	15	19	22	26	19	21	27
Where I work	18	19	18	23	10	30	4	10
University/College of HE/ Open University	18	17	24	9	16	15	17	34
Adult education centre/ evening institute	8	7	8	10	8	6	10	7
Private training centre	5	5	4	4	6	6	4	3
Employer's training centre	5	5	4	5	3	8	1	3
Community centre	3	3	2	3	4	*	6	1
School	3	2	3	2	4	2	3	4
Skill centre/job centre	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3
Voluntary organisation including trade union, WI, WEA, church	1	1	1	*	2	1	2	*
At home – informal learning/from book	10	14	8	9	8	5	18	1
At home – structured correspondence course or open learning	2	3	3	1	2	2	3	2
At home – using computer/ CD ROM/ Internet	1	3	*	2	1	1	2	1
At home – from TV/radio	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	*
Other educational institution	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Other place	4	3	5	4	5	2	5	2

*Sources over 1% only listed.

Length of current/recent study

The NIACE surveys, as discussed earlier, ask the respondents to describe what they were learning in response to a broadly drafted question, but without the additional prompting and differentiation which have more recently been developed by the NALS survey. The results of these differences in questioning were discussed in detail in *The Learning Divide* and will only be summarised here. The NALS sequence of related prompted questions identifies much larger numbers of shorter episodes particularly of workplace-based education and training, many lasting less than one week, while the NIACE surveys pick up proportionally more episodes of longer learning.

Table 26: Length of time learners have been studying/expect to study their main subject

	1996	1999		
		All	Men	Women
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	1,892	2,044	980	1,064
Less than one week	3	5	5	6
1 week – one month	5	5	6	4
Over 1 – 3 months	7	9	9	9
Total – up to 3 months	15	19	20	19
Over 3 – 6 months	16	10	9	10
7 – 12 months	11	13	10	15
Over 1 – 2 years	20	17	15	18
Over 2 years	35	39	44	35
Don't know/can't remember	3	3	2	3

The current survey shows the same proportion of learners (42%) studying for less than one year as in 1996, but with somewhat more episodes (4%) of less than three months and fewer medium length episodes. More women than men record medium-length periods of study, while more men than women record periods of study of over two years. These differences do not appear to relate to any marked differences in relation to qualifications.

The role of qualifications

Just under two-thirds (64%) of learners are aiming for a qualification, and there are few differences between men and women, except that 3% more men than women record studying for a first degree and also for a 'professional qualification' (see Table 27). Three per cent more women than men are studying for a nursing qualification. Despite the introduction of NVQs and GNVQs, the world of adult qualifications changes very slowly and there appear to be only small differences between 1996 and 1999. The plethora of qualifications makes their recognition and grouping difficult and apparent differences between the two surveys may equally be due to the large number of small categories. Table 28 tracks the newer qualifications by age-group of learner, summarising the proportions of each age-group who are aiming for qualifications and identifying the new vocational qualifications which are increasingly being taken by younger generations of learners.

High proportions of learners continue to aim for qualifications through to their mid-fifties though the proportions do drop steadily: 72% of 25-34-year-olds, 62% of 35-44-year olds, and 51% of 45-54 year olds are aiming for qualifications as a result of their learning. As is to be expected, 17-19-year-olds are mainly aiming for A levels, NVQs or a first degree. There are smaller groups of older learners who are aiming for NVQs , but there are also continuing groups of adults aiming for the more traditional City & Guilds qualifications, and for HNDs/HNCs. The proportion of mature people aiming for a degree reduces with the 35-44 age-group, with other professional qualifications and diplomas assuming increased importance. Teaching and nursing qualifications appear low, but are nowadays likely to be studied within a first degree course.

There are of course major problems related to the appropriateness for adults of qualifications historically designed for younger people. Such problems relate not only to the increasing modularisation of courses and the need for different assessment procedures for new modes of delivery, but also to the need for curricula more suited to adult experience and interests. The reformed QCA is still much affected by the traditions of the front-loaded initial system, and despite general agreement on the desirability of developing a unified post-school credit framework, progress towards it is still slow. The system still contains strong vested interests, educational and financial, both among providers and among examining bodies, against change. There are some welcome signs, for example the recent report by the UKCC recommending a credit structure for nursing. It is also to be hoped that the increasing requirement for continuing professional development among doctors, lawyers, and so on, will be systematised in such a way as to support sensible post-initial frameworks which can be integrated rationally with initial qualifications. National Training Organisations may play a helpful role in this respect.

The main framework for recognising achievement developed specifically for adults over the past decade has been that developed by the National Open College Network (NOCN). It has been successful in reaching large numbers of adults (10% of qualifications taken by adults in 1997-8 were from NOCN) and extending access, and it has helped by its acceptance for funding by the FEFC under Schedule 2 arrangements. However, its assessment procedures, which are regionally rather than nationally validated, go against the grain of other current principles of assessment which look predominantly for measures of competence rather than for effort or time spent.

Table 27: Qualifications, if any, learners are/were aiming for

	1999	1996
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	1,892
None/not aiming for qualification	36	35
GCSE	2	2
A level/A/S level, S level	4	5
YTS certificate	*	–
RSA/Pitmans	2	3
City & Guilds	3	5
National or general BTEC/OCN or OND	1	2
OCN Credit	1	NSR
NVQ/SVQ/GNVQ Level 1 or equivalent	4	3
NVQ/SVQ/GNVQ Level 2 or equivalent	5	5
NVQ/SVQ/GNVQ Level 3 or equivalent	4	3
NVQ/SVQ/GNVQ Level 4 or equivalent	2	1
Higher BTEC, HND/HNC	2	2
Nursing qualification	2	2
Teaching qualification (including TEFL)	1	1
First degree	10	13
Diploma	5	5
Higher degree (e.g. PhD)	3	2
Other professional qualification	11	13
Other post-graduate qualification	2	NSR
Don't know	5	NSR

*Sources over 1% only listed.

Table 28: Qualifications, if any, learners are/were aiming for, by age

	All	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	191	244	488	432	350	202	104	33
All aiming for qualifications	64	97	90	72	62	51	33	22	22
GCSE	2	4	1	2	3	2	1	1	–
A level/A/S level/S Highers	4	24	3	1	2	3	2	1	–
City & Guilds	3	2	3	2	4	4	4	–	–
Open College Network	1	–	*	1	1	*	1	–	–
BTEC National	1	2	3	1	1	*	–	–	–
RSA/Pitmans	2	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	–
NVQ/SVQ Level 1	3	8	3	4	3	3	2	2	–
NVQ/SVQ Level 2	4	8	6	4	3	1	1	–	–
NVQ/SVQ Level 3	3	6	5	3	3	2	1	–	–
NVQ/SVQ Level 4	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	*	–
GNVQ Level 1	1	3	1	*	1	–	*	–	–
GNVQ Level 2	1	5	1	1	1	–	*	–	–
GNVQ Level 3	1	6	1	1	1	–	*	–	–
GNVQ Level 4	1	4	1	*	*	–	–	–	–
HNC/HND	2	4	3	5	2	*	*	–	–
Nursing qualification	2	1	3	3	2	1	–	1	–
Teaching qualification	1	1	2	2	1	1	*	1	–
Undergraduate	10	20	34	10	5	2	2	–	3
Diploma	5	2	2	8	6	4	2	2	2
Higher degree	3	1	9	4	3	3	1	1	–
Other post-graduate qualification	2	–	4	3	1	2	–	–	–
Other professional qualification	11	4	7	15	14	11	6	4	3
Don't know	5	1	3	3	6	8	8	8	16

Other difficulties provided by current vocational qualifications are: increased cost in the additional supervision and assessment of workplace-based practice and competence; and the additional cost of assessing and certifying larger numbers of smaller bite-sized chunks of learning.

Qualifications and the new framework for education and training targets

As part of the Government's policy development for lifelong learning, the National Education and Training Targets, last set in 1996 by NACETT, have been re-reviewed to encourage adult learning actively and revised targets have been adopted for 2002. From April 2001, the work of NACETT itself will be subsumed into the new national Learning and Skills Council. The new English targets for 2002 require 50% of adults, between the ages of 18 and 59/64 who are in employment or actively seeking it to hold a level 3 qualification (equivalent to 2 A levels, an NVQ level 3 or an Advanced GNVQ) and 20% of adults to hold a level 4 qualification i.e. having an NVQ level 4, or a degree or a higher level vocational qualification. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are also setting national targets.

The most significant target in England, from the point of view of adult learning, is a new and imaginative **Learning Participation Target**, which requires a 7% reduction by 2002 in the proportion of non-learners. The new target covers everybody aged between 16 and 69, regardless of economic status, except those in full-time continuous education. The definition of learning to be used for the target is wide and 'embraces all types of taught, classroom-based learning of a deliberate nature, including self-study. Both vocational and non-vocational learning are included, regardless of whether or not they lead to qualifications' (DfEE, 1998).

The further significance of the new Learning Participation Target is that, in order to measure it, the Government has accepted that a regular pattern of large-scale quantitative surveys, using a similar framework to the NALS 1997 survey, will need to be undertaken. The importance of this will be commented on again in Chapter 18.

Table 29 shows the highest level of qualifications held by men and women. Seventy-one per cent overall hold some sort of educational qualification, but 11% more men have some sort of qualification than women (77% compared with 66%). Increasingly, this difference is explained by the larger number of older women without qualifications who have outlived their male contemporaries. Over half of those who are currently retired hold no qualifications at all, 56% of those aged 65-74 and 60% of those aged 75 and over. Those not currently working, including the early retired, contain over one-third (37%) with no qualifications. Interestingly, the main figure to show a change between 1996 and 1999 is the proportion of unemployed with no qualifications, which is down from 32% to 28%. The proportion with qualifications increases as the age of respondents decreases, as Table 30 shows. The second major generational change shows among people in their 40s and 50s, many of whom will have left school before the raising of the school-leaving age to 16.

Table 29: Highest qualification held, by gender and employment status

	Total 1999	Male	Female	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired	Student	1996
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	1,957	617	249	749	1,273	209	4,673
Apprenticeship	3	5	*	3	1	3	1	4	–	3
GCSE/O levels/CSE	17	14	20	16	22	23	25	7	27	21
A Levels/Highers, A/S Levels/S Level	8	8	8	7	10	6	6	3	41	9
YTS	*	*	*	*	–	*	1	–	–	*
RSA/Pitmans	2	*	4	1	3	2	3	3	1	3
City & Guilds	7	11	3	11	5	7	4	4	2	6
BTEC First/Second / Scotvec	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	*	–	1
ONC/OND/BTEC National	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	*	2
S/GNVQ/NVQ Level 1	1	1	1	1	1	2	*	–	*	1
S/GNVQ/NVQ Level 2	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	1	–	1
S/GNVQ/NVQ Level 3	2	2	2	1	*	*	*	–	–	*
S/GNVQ/NVQ Level 4	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	1	1	*
HNC/HND	4	6	2	6	1	1	1	2	4	NSR
Nursing qualification	2	*	3	2	3	–	1	2	*	2
Undergraduate degree	6	7	6	9	8	4	5	2	7	8
Diploma	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	3	4
Postgraduate/higher degree (e.g. MA)	3	4	1	5	3	–	1	1	1	2
Other qualifications	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	7	1	8
Don't know/can't recall	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	1	
All holding educational qualifications	71	77	66	85	75	72	63	48	98	72
No qualifications held	29	29	23	15	25	28	37	52	2	28

*Sources over 1% only listed.

Table 30: Highest qualification held, by age

	Total	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	236	347	968	923	851	694	663	372
Apprenticeship	3	–	*	1	2	2	5	5	3
GCSE/O levels/CSE	17	48	14	23	23	13	11	7	5
A Levels/Highers, A/S Levels/S Level	8	21	26	9	7	6	3	3	3
YTS	*	–	*	1	*	–	–	–	–
RSA/Pitmans	2	1	1	2	2	3	4	3	2
City & Guilds	7	1	3	10	10	8	6	4	2
BTEC First/Second/Scotvec	1	–	2	2	*	*	*	–	–
ONC/OND/BTEC National	1	–	1	2	1	1	1	*	*
S/NVQ/GNVQ Level 1	1	4	4	2	2	1	1	*	–
S/NVQ/GNVQ Level 2	2	8	7	2	2	1	1	*	–
S/NVQ/GNVQ Level 3	1	4	6	2	2	1	1	–	–
S/NVQ/GNVQ Level 4	1	1	2	1	*	1	*	*	–
HNC/HND	4	1	4	7	3	4	3	2	1
Nursing qualification	2	–	1	1	3	1	3	1	2
Undergraduate degree	6	*	11	10	8	6	4	3	2
Diploma	3	1	3	4	5	3	3	1	2
Postgraduate/higher degree (e.g. MA)	3	–	*	4	3	5	3	1	2
Other qualifications	4	–	1	2	5	4	6	4	4
Don't know/can't recall	2	*	1	2	2	2	3	4	4
All holding education qualification(s)	71	91	89	88	83	67	63	44	40
No qualifications held	29	9	11	12	17	33	37	56	60

*Sources over 1% only listed.

Chapter Thirteen

Barriers to learning: access and learning support

Some progress has undoubtedly been made over the last three decades in understanding and dealing with some of the main barriers to access for adult learners. The increased flexibility of the Open University and other open and distance learning resources has broken geographical barriers, and the increase in part-time provision has broken some of the time barriers. Attitudinal, motivational and dispositional barriers still produce difficulties for many, as do financial issues.

Financing the provision of learning as well as funding the learners themselves will continue to require contributions from a mix of sources: learners, their employers when they have one, and from government or publicly-funded bodies such as local authorities, TECs, or in the future, the Learning and Skills Councils. The balance of contributions will vary for different sorts of learning, for different forms of delivery and for different groups of people. What is changing is the move away from funding through institutions, the dominant mode for initial education, towards the funding of learners. Of course, funding learners is not new: the basic student grant to study for an undergraduate degree is the classic form of this. There has been a number of experimental projects run by the Manpower Services Commission and its successor bodies over the last 20 years which have offered some form of financial support for learners, sometimes covering tuition fees alone, but often also providing maintenance: examples include training credits, credits for adult guidance or for open learning and career development loans. While some of these development projects have been more successful than others, none of them has yet been funded nationally. There have also been some helpful tax concessions on tuition fees for specified types of courses, which offer a useful precedent to build on.

As in 1996, one-quarter of all learners do not have fees to pay (see Table 31). Thirty per cent of people pay their own fees, with an additional 3% being helped by a relative. Significantly more women than men pay their own fees, 35% of women compared with 26% of men (30% overall), while more men (19%) than women (13%) have fees paid by their employer (16% overall). A further 9% are learning through employer-funded provision. Taken together, employer-funding focuses most on ABs (29%) and C2s (28%), while government and local authority funding focuses on C1s (18%) and DEs (21%). The proportions who are paying no fees rises to around one-third for the unemployed, those not working and those who are retired. Not surprisingly, employer support is strongest for those working full-time (41%) as compared with nearly as high

Table 31: Sources used for payment of fees, by gender, socio-economic group and employment status

	All	Men	Women	AB	C1	C2	DE
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	980	1,064	534	706	410	394
No fees	26	28	25	27	21	29	33
Self	30	26	35	34	31	31	23
Employer/potential employer paid outside fees	16	19	13	19	15	19	8
Family/relative	3	2	3	3	3	2	2
Employer-funded provision of learning	9	9	9	10	11	9	5
Training for Work/Government Scheme	3	3	2	2	2	6	5
Training Credit	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other government funding	5	5	5	2	6	2	10
Local authority grant	8	9	8	6	12	3	11
Charitable Trust or other non-governmental organisation	*	*	*	*	1	1	*
Other	2	2	2	1	2	3	3
Don't know	1	3	1	*	1	1	1

	All	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired	Student
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	1,007	306	103	224	203	202
No fees	26	24	25	31	34	32	21
Self	30	28	39	22	31	53	11
Employer/potential employer paid outside fees	16	27	10	7	5	1	–
Family/relative	3	1	4	7	2	–	12
Employer-funded provision of learning	9	14	7	1	4	5	*
Training for Work/Government Scheme	3	2	1	15	4	1	2
Training Credit	*	*	*	–	*	–	1
Other government funding	5	2	4	9	10	4	11
Local authority grant	8	3	9	6	7	3	42
Charitable Trust or other non-governmental organisation	*	*	*	–	1	–	1
Other	2	2	3	1	3	1	3
Don't know	1	*	1	3	2	5	1

a proportion of part-time workers paying for themselves (39%). Over one-half of retired people (53%) are paying for themselves. Of course, the survey does not pick up all the fee waivers and reductions to which pensioners and other beneficiaries are entitled. See NIACE's *Fees Survey* (Winkless, 1999) for evidence of LEA practice. Some colleges waive fees for particular groups as a marketing strategy.

A difficulty for adult learners is the lack of consistency in provision of grants, particularly with the cut-back in the availability of discretionary grants in many areas. The 1999 survey separates those in receipt of local authority grants from other government funding, recording 8% with local authority grants and 5% with other government funding, a drop on 1996 which recorded 19% taking these two categories together. It will be important to monitor the impact of new local and regional structures to check whether the distribution of student financial support shows a more equitable pattern in the future.

Table 32: Sources used for payment of fees, by age

	All	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	191	244	488	432	350	202	104	33
No fees	26	46	19	22	23	25	31	34	41
Self	30	9	18	29	33	35	38	58	42
Family/relative	3	10	8	3	1	1	1	–	–
Employer/potential employer paid outside fees	16	6	9	21	19	22	10	1	3
Employer-funded learning provision	9	1	5	11	13	12	9	1	–
Training for work/government training scheme, e.g. New Deal	3	4	2	3	4	2	1	–	–
Training credit	*	1	*	*	*	–	–	–	–
Local authority grant	8	18	31	7	3	2	3	1	6
Other government funding	5	7	10	6	4	2	3	2	3
Charitable trust or other non-government organisation	*	–	2	1	*	*	–	–	–
Other	2	2	3	1	1	3	3	2	3
Don't know	1	1	–	1	*	*	2	3	5

Table 32 provides an age profile of fee payment. The youngest and oldest age groups benefit most from having no fees to pay, whether they are in receipt of mandatory grants at the young end or fee remission at the older end. Support from the family is highest among the conventional student age groups, 17-19 and 20-24. Employer support for fees or direct funding of learning is most important in the three middle age groups. Self-funding increases from 25-34 onwards, rising steadily from 29%, to 38% of 55-64s and 58% of 65-74s. Among 20-24s, 10% are on "other" government funding.

Table 33 shows the variation in financial support across English regions. Employer support is highest in East Anglia (30%). Greater London (14%), East Anglia (13%) East Midlands (12%) and Yorkshire/Humberside (10%) provide most local authority grants.

Funding through Government training schemes, such as New Deal, is highest in the West Midlands and the North, both 6%. West Midlands records the highest level of other government funding (12%) followed by East Anglia (7%) and the South West (6%).

Table 33: Sources used for payment of fees, by English region

	English region									
	All	Grtr Lndn	Sth East	Sth West	East Ang.	West Mids.	East Mids.	Nrth West	Yrks/ Humber	Nrth
Base: all current/ recent learners = 100%	1,744	277	402	156	87	155	171	228	178	91
No fees	27	22	29	23	23	25	33	29	25	28
Self	31	32	36	31	25	24	20	31	34	30
Family/relative	3	6	3	3	4	1	1	2	2	2
Employer/potential employer paid outside fees	16	13	16	15	20	17	16	16	15	18
Employer-funded learning provision	9	5	8	15	10	9	10	8	8	9
Training for work/government training scheme, e.g. New Deal	2	2	1	1	–	6	1	2	4	6
Training credit	*	–	*	1	–	–	1	–	*	–
Local authority grant	9	14	4	7	13	7	12	7	10	4
Other government funding	4	4	2	6	7	12	5	3	2	2
Charitable trust or other non-government organisation	*	*	*	1	2	1	–	–	–	1
Other	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	1
Don't know	1	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	–	1

It is also important to continue to check on the additional costs involved in study, particularly since the trend is to more part-time study and to the greater use of new technologies which in turn tends to load more costs onto the learner. It is encouraging that for most groups there is no sign of increased study costs being a problem; indeed the opposite is the case (see Table 34). The proportion saying that they have no other costs has increased slightly from 41% to 43%, though fewer women report 'no other costs' than men. Three per cent of women record childcare costs, rising to 8% of those with children 0-4. More women also record travel costs, 33% of women compared with 26% of men, probably because less of their learning is workplace-based.

The two main cost ingredients in 1996 were the cost of equipment (42%) and travel costs (32%). The main change in 1999 is a drop in the numbers of people mentioning cost of equipment, down to 37%. Travel costs are mentioned by slightly fewer of those in work, but by 10% more of the unemployed, 7% more of students and 6% of those who are retired. Mentions of the cost of equipment have dropped by 5% overall, by 8% among the unemployed and 6% among part-time workers. It is to be hoped that this is due to an increased provision of IT equipment support by colleges or employers rather than more negative factors!

Table 34: Other costs of learning, by employment status

	All	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired	Student	1996
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	1,007	306	103	224	203	202	1,892
No other costs	43	51	39	46	43	39	14	41
Cost of equipment	37	31	35	25	38	43	68	42
Travel costs	31	24	36	41	30	23	55	32
Lost wages/salary	4	4	5	5	1	*	9	5
Cost of childcare	2	1	2	–	4	–	3	2
Lost over-time wages	1	2	*	1	–	–	–	2
Loss of benefits	1	*	1	1	–	–	2	1
Other costs	3	2	3	1	3	1	8	5
Don't know	6	5	7	7	5	7	4	2

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Factors affecting access and dropout

The 1999 survey again confined itself to progress on the learner's current/recent course and to factors which 'prevent learning nowadays'.

Widening participation is a major policy goal both for further and higher education and increasing priority is given to improving student retention. While extending access continues to be of great importance, it is arguably even more important to retain those who have put their foot inside the door.

At the time of interview, somewhat more women (37%) than men (33%) had already completed their main course, nearly two-thirds of respondents were still studying their main course, and 5% had given it up before the end (Table 35). While this is only a small group, it is an important one to understand since those who have made a commitment and started to study will have more specific experiences to relate and may have lost confidence and felt more let down. Previous experience of researching reasons for drop-out among adult learners typically produces some issues driven by factors extrinsic to the course and some which are intrinsic to learning and to the course itself. Based only on those who gave up during the course, the key external factors in Table 36 are 'pressures of work/job change' (18%), health reasons (15%), cost/financial pressures (11%), 'found did not have time' (10%), 'problems with childcare'(5%), 'course was closed down' (4%). The factors intrinsic to the learning experience are 'lost interest/got bored' (7%), 'too difficult/level too high' (7%), 'course not suitable' (6%), 'dislike tutor/other people on course' (5%).

Table 35: Proportion of current/recent learners giving up before the end of the course, by gender

	All	Men	Women
Base: all current/recent learners = 100%	2,044	980	1,064
Completed the course	35	33	37
Gave up before the end	5	4	5
Still studying	60	63	59

Of external factors, more men quote cost (21%), health reasons (12%) and 'did not have time' (11%) and of internal factors, more men lost interest/got bored (11%) or found it too difficult (10%). Of external factors, more women quote 'work pressures' (27%) and 'found did not have time' (10%), problems with childcare (6%) and 'health reasons (6%). Intrinsic reasons featured low with women, the highest being 'disliking the tutor/other students' (5%).

Table 36: Reasons for giving up before finishing the course

	1996	1999		
		All	**Men**	**Women**
Base: all current/recent learners who gave up their courses = 100%	122	97	41	56
Cost/financial pressures	13	11	21	4
Too difficult/level set to high	3	7	10	4
Not demanding enough/level set to low	1	–	–	–
Course was closed down	5	4	4	4
Problems with childcare	4	5	3	6
Pressures of work/job change	11	18	7	27
Poor facilities on course	3	1	3	–
Moved away	1	5	5	5
Lost interest/got bored	8	7	11	4
Course not suitable	7	6	8	3
Learned as much as I wanted	5	1	–	1
Dislike tutor/teacher/other people on the course	3	5	5	5
Changed to another course	–	1	–	1
Found I did not have time	7	10	11	10
Health reasons	8	15	12	6
Other reasons	23	13	9	16
Don't know/can't remember	6	1	1	1

Learners who give up before the end of their course appear in greater proportions in categories frequently associated with educational disadvantage. In percentage order, those dropping out comprise: 15% of the unemployed, 10% of socio-economic classes D/E, 10% of those with no educational qualifications, 10% of recent learners, 9% of those not working, 9% of those with no phone, 9% of those without access to a personal computer and 8% of those not likely to learn in the future.

Interpreting such open-ended information continues to be a challenge for researchers, but there are clear indications in such information of the need for appropriate information and advice which might help match learners to courses more appropriately, support them better and hence reduce drop-out.

Main factors which prevent learning nowadays

The advantage of the modest set of answers discussed in the preceding paragraph is that they refer to a specific course the learner has recently failed to complete and about which the learner may be prepared to be precise. All respondents were also asked about their likelihood of learning within the next three years. Apart from people who answered that they were 'very likely to learn' within the next three years, respondents were then asked a complementary question:

'From the following list, what, if anything, would you say are the main things preventing you from learning these days?'

The list contains statements which have been developed gradually in discussion between the different research teams involved. The goal of the set of statements is to try to cover all major possibilities rather than summarise or group them too much. Table 37 spells out the total list, analysing it against men and women, and against learning status. Table 38 then restricts itself to the main mentions, recording only those which rate 4% or more, analysing them by employment status.

The breadth of possible answers clearly offers to people a non-threatening way of responding and does not prevent people being clear about such factors as their age, their infirmities or their lack of interest in learning. The group without post-school experience and no current expectation of learning contains 40% who 'are not interested/don't want to', followed by 19% who 'feel they are too old/too ill/disabled', 12% who (confidently) 'don't feel anything prevents them': all these reasons coming before the practical ones of 'work/other time pressures '(11%) and 'child/other care arrangements' (8%). Of course, this group contains many older people, but with increased longevity, there is serious scope for encouraging more learning to add to the quality of life. The largest group of current learners who are 'not very likely to learn within the next three years', say they 'do not feel that anything prevents them' (31%), followed by 'work/other time pressures' (21%), cost/money (11%), lack of interest (10%). The pattern for recent learners is quite similar to that for current learners.

Table 37: Main factors preventing learning these days, by gender and learning status (prompted list)

	1999						
	All except 'very likely to learn'	Men	Women	Current learners	Recent learners	Past learners	None since full-time education
Base: all except 'very likely to learn in next 3 years = 100%	3,956	1,835	2,120	467	647	1,054	1,744
Not interested/don't want to	27	26	28	10	12	22	40
Cost/money	7	7	8	11	12	7	5
Childcare arrangements/other dependants	8	2	13	4	9	11	8
Transport/too far to travel	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
I don't like being in groups of people I don't know	1	*	1	*	*	*	1
I don't know what is available	1	1	1	*	1	1	1
Work/other time pressures	17	18	15	21	23	21	11
I fell I am too old/too ill/ disabled	15	14	15	5	8	17	19
Worried about being out alone	1	*	1	1	*	*	1
Don't feel anything prevents me	17	20	15	31	24	16	12
Haven't got round to it	4	4	4	2	4	5	4
Don't feel colleges/centres are welcoming	*	*	*	*	–	*	*
No suitable courses available	1	1	1	2	2	1	*
I don't have the qualifications I need	1	*	1	–	*	1	*
I do not have the abilities I need	1	1	1	1	*	1	1
I am too nervous about the idea of starting learning	2	1	2	*	1	1	2
I would not be able to get time off work	4	6	2	2	5	5	4
I've tried to learn in the past and it has been unsuccessful	1	1	1	1	*	1	1
I know all I need to know	3	3	3	2	2	4	3
Other factors	3	3	2	5	3	2	2
Don't know	5	5	5	13	5	2	3

In theory, neither group of current or recent learners should pose an issue for access or motivation, since they should know their way around the system enough. There are, however, a number

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of minor indications to cause concern: just over 10% both of current and recent learners mention cost/money as a factor, and 5% of recent and past learners say they would not be able to get time off work. As many as 13% of women mention childcare or care for other dependants, as do 9% of recent and 11% of past learners. The proportion mentioning childcare rises to 20% for people with children of 5-15 and 37% with children 0-4. It may be too complacent to assume that current and recent learners will convert back to learning easily without further stimulus or assistance, particularly with childcare.

Table 38 summarises the main reasons preventing learning nowadays analysed against employment status. There are solid percentages of between 35% and 50% among all employment groups who provide few clues as to how to stimulate them into learning: they use general phrases 'not interested, don't want to, don't feel anything prevents me'. Focusing on more specific reasons, among those working full-time, 'work/other time pressures' rates highest, quoted by nearly one-third (31%) of full-time workers. 'Inability to get time off work' (9%) and 'cost/money' (8%) are other specific factors. For part-time workers, 'work/other time pressures' rates highest at 21% followed by 'childcare etc' (16%) while 'cost/money' is at the same level as for full-time workers (8%).

Among the unemployed, 'cost/money' is the most important reason (20%) followed by 'childcare etc' (10%). The group who are not working includes both some people who are parents of young children and also some older people who may have retired early, hence 'childcare/other care' features as very high (27%) as does 'too old/ill disabled' (14%). Finally, 39% of the retired confirm general expectations by saying they are 'not interested/don't want to' or that they are 'too old/ill/disabled' (34%).

Table 38: Main things preventing learning these days, by employment status

	All	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired
Base: all not learning now = 100%	3,956	1,441	451	182	600	1,196
Not interested/don't want to	27	20	25	22	25	39
I don't feel anything prevents me	17	21	17	17	12	13
Work/other time pressures	17	31	21	6	9	4
Too old/ill/disabled	15	4	7	7	14	34
Childcare arrangements/ other arrangements	8	4	16	10	27	1
Cost/money	7	8	8	20	8	3
Haven't got round to doing it	4	5	7	5	5	2
I would not be able to get the time off work	4	9	2	1	1	*

* main mentions only

Life circumstances

The 1996 survey included for the first time in the NIACE sequence of questionnaires a question attempting to see if there was any link between people's life circumstances and their likelihood of engaging in adult learning. Respondents were offered a list of statements of personal and family circumstances and asked if any of them applied to their recent or current situation. They were not specifically asked if the circumstances had any relationship to their learning. Cross-analysing the answers and without implying any causal relationship showed that five of the listed circumstances related to groups with higher proportions of current/recent learners than in the total population. The groups with higher proportions of learners in 1996 were those who wanted promotion (71%), those who had moved home (59%), those who wanted to help their children to learn (48%), those who had been involved in a broken relationship (45%) and those who had lost their job (45%).

Table 39 compares the 1996 and 1999 survey in relation both to the incidence of these life circumstances and, similarly, to the proportion experiencing those circumstances who are defined as current or recent learners.

Table 39: Relationship of participation in study to recent life experiences [illegible]

	All to whom statement applies		Percentage of group who are current/recent learners	
	1996	1999	1996	1999
Base: all respondents = 100%	4,673	5,054	40	40
Moved home/away	13	10	59	59
Had an illness	11	10	32	39
Started a family	8	8	39	42
Been involved in a divorce, etc	7	5	45	49
To help my children to learn	7	10	48	48
Taken early retirement	7	12	33	22
Lost my job	7	4	45	46
Wanted promotion	7	6	71	72
None of these	52	49	39	38

It would be surprising if there were major changes in the incidence of life circumstances over the last three years in the country as a whole and the changes that there are show up mainly in line with national trends. There is a drop of 3% in people losing their job, and also in people moving house. The largest change is an increase in early retirement of 5%, and an encouraging increase in people wanting to help their children to learn, of 3%.

The groups who experience particular life circumstances and where the proportion of people who are current/recent learners has increased are: among those who have had an illness from 32% to 39%; among those who have had a broken relationship from 45% to 49%; and among those who have started a family from 39% to 42%. It is interesting that all these circumstances are particularly internal to the person and the family, rather than stemming from labour market or other structural factors. The other group which shows the largest change is those who have taken early retirement, where the proportion of current/recent learners has, by reverse, dropped from 33% to 22%. These trends are mixed, but the drop among those who are early retired ties in with the discouraging participation figures among older age-groups discussed earlier. It is clear that a range of stimuli impact on the decision to take up learning and suggests people's purposes in learning are complex.

Attitudes to learning and future plans for learning

While there has been a shift in the thinking of government and other decision-makers towards the importance of lifelong learning, there is little evidence of this yet having any effect on people at large. If anything, attitudes are becoming more negative. The seven key attitude statements developed over a number of studies were repeated again in 1999 and five of them produce similar responses to 1996 (See Table 40). There is still a high level of agreement (94%) to the general statement *'Learning is something people do through out their lives'*. The statement rated second highest (73%) is also still encouraging *'People who get training find their jobs more interesting'*; followed by *'I am confident about learning new skills'* (72%). However, while 92% of current learners are confident about learning new skills, the proportion drops to 54% among those who have had no post-initial education.

What is curious is that the two statements about the benefits of training, which were ranked at the same level in 1996, now show a significant difference:

Proportion agreeing:	**1996**	**1999**
People who get training find their jobs more interesting	*72%*	*73%*
People who get trained at work end up with better promotion or better pay	*70%*	*63%*

Is it that people are becoming less optimistic about the tangible benefits of training at work or are they becoming more instrumental in their motivation and therefore more cynical or just realistic? There is also no improvement in the proportions of people who 'don't see why they should pay for learning that is to do with their job or career', which is static at 44%. Similarly, the proportion of people who think that they 'should not be expected to learn new skills in their own time' is static, though happily at the lower level of 30%. The other encouraging trend is the decrease in the proportion agreeing 'there is not enough help and advice available about the different sorts of learning people do' which has dropped from 47% to 40%, and presumably reflects the benefit of recent improvements in advice and guidance systems.

The comparison between 1996 and 1999 provides a set of mixed messages. It is difficult to resist the idea that while the views of opinion-leaders have moved forward, the lack of change on the ground in terms of provision and support means that these messages have not yet touched the hearts and minds of potential learners, particularly those who have not been involved in learning as adults already. Government believes we need a learning society, but significant numbers of people remain to be convinced that it might be a good thing for them.

Table 40: Proportion agreeing strongly/agreeing with given statement

	1996					1999				
	Total	Current learners	Recent learners	Past learners	None since full-time	Total	Current learners	Recent learners	Past learners	None since full-time
Base: all respondents in specified group = 100%	4,673	1,074	818	1,086	1,696	5,054	1,125	919	1,148	1,815
Learning is something people do throughout their lives	93	97	96	95	89	94	97	97	96	89
I am confident about learning new skills	74	94	89	74	56	72	92	89	71	54
People who get training find their jobs are more interesting	72	80	77	74	65	73	74	78	76	68
People who get trained at work end up with better promotion or better pay	70	71	67	71	69	63	63	63	67	64
There is not enough help and advice available about the different sorts of learning people do	47	53	48	43	47	40	45	39	35	40
I don't see why I should pay for learning that is to do with my job or career	44	39	39	40	50	44	43	46	41	45
People should not be expected to learn new skills for their career in their own time	31	23	28	30	38	30	26	27	25	34

Future plans for learning

Chapter 4 showed that the proportion of people who say that they 'are very or fairly likely to learn in the next three years' did not change between 1996 and 1999 and still stands at 38% overall. There is a small increase (2%) in the proportion of those 'very likely to learn in the next three years', and this shows in a 5% increase among social classes AB. This is paralleled by a discouraging increase in the proportion of DEs who are 'very unlikely to learn' which has increased from 54% to 61%.

All respondents were then asked, as in the 1996 survey:

What, if anything, would you be most interested in learning about if you could?

Table 41 shows the overall proportion of respondents in different socio-economic and demographic groups who name any subject they would like to learn about, comparing 1999 with 1996, and also including figures from a similar question on a related study for NIACE by MORI in 1994. Two-thirds of the population as a whole name subjects(s) that they would be interested in learning about, with little difference between men and women. The group with the highest proportion naming subjects is the 20-24-year-olds (81%) and the figure drops as the groups increase in age, down to 47% among 65-74-year-olds and 30% among 75s and over.

Table 41: Proportion of group specified giving subjects they would like to learn about: 1994, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1999	1996	1994
All respondents	66	69	67
Gender			
Male	67	69	67
Female	65	69	68
Age			
17 – 19	77	74	76
20 – 24	81	80	75
25 – 34	78	77	79
35 – 44	75	76	74
45 – 54	68	71	68
55 – 64	58	63	62
65 – 74	47	57	47
75 and over	30	46	
Socio-economic class			
AB	74	74	80
C1	70	72	71
C2	68	67	67
DE	55	65	58
Learning status			
Current learning	78	77	77
Recent learning	78	80	84
Past learning	70	74	77
None since full-time education	51	56	57

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There is a similar but less steep decline in social class groups with three-quarters (74%) of ABs naming subjects, 70% of C1s, 68% of C2s and 55% of DEs. An analysis by terminal age of education shows a similar divide: 59% of those leaving school at or before 16 named subjects compared with 80% of those staying on till 21 and over. The general pattern over the three surveys is very similar and the only change worth commenting on is one which ties in with the increase noted above in the proportion of DEs who are 'very unlikely to learn', and shows decreases among the DEs and among the three oldest age-groups in the proportion naming subjects they were interested in learning about. Four out of five current and recent learners name subjects they are interested in learning about. By comparison, only one-half of those who have done no learning since their full-time education were able to name subjects of interest.

Subjects of future study

Table 42 focuses only on those people who name subjects they are interested in learning about and compares subjects of interest to men and to women in 1996 and in 1999. The spread of subjects continues to be extremely wide, though two subject areas, computer studies/ICT and foreign languages, now clearly dominate the list. Nearly one-quarter (24%) of potential learners are interested in computer studies, followed by 13% interested in foreign languages. The majority of other subjects are mentioned by 3%, 4% or 5% of potential learners naming each subject. While these, of course, appear quite small percentages, all of them represent, potentially, thousands of learners.

As Table 42 shows, interest is not evenly spread between men and women: 7% more men than women are interested in computer studies, which parallels the 6% more men than women who are currently learning ICT. Some subjects are necessary for professional or work areas which are gender-related: more women are interested in social studies/social work/care (7%) and in nursing/ health studies (9%) than men, and more men are interested in engineering (6%) and car maintenance (4%). The only subject area which shows a significant increase in 1999 compared with 1996 is computer studies, from 16% to 24%. Creative arts and gardening show a small increase overall. More important for women are creative arts (8%), cookery/catering (6%), handicrafts (4%), and dressmaking/needlework (4%). Several subjects have fallen back perhaps as a result: social studies/social work from 9% to 5% and foreign languages from 16% to 13% show the largest falls.

Table 42: Subjects people are interested in learning about in the future, 1996 and 1999 compared

	1996			1999		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Base: all giving subjects = 100%	3,224	1,566	1,658	3,319	1,580	1,739
Computer studies	16	18	15	24	27	20
Foreign languages	16	17	15	13	14	12
Social studies/social work/community care	9	6	12	5	3	7
Business/administration/management	6	7	4	5	5	5
Accountancy	3	3	3	3	2	3
Other professional qualifications	4	5	4	3	3	3
Other vocational qualifications	4	4	5	4	4	4
History/local history	6	6	5	5	5	5
Cookery/catering	5	3	7	4	2	6
Creative arts: painting, sculpture, pottery	5	3	6	6	4	8
Music; learn an instrument, singing	5	7	4	3	4	2
Nursing, health studies, first aid	5	2	6	5	1	9
English language/literature	4	2	6	3	2	4
Handicrafts	4	1	6	2	1	4
Engineering	3	6	*	3	6	*
Physical sports	3	4	2	2	3	2
Dressmaking/needlework	3	*	6	2	*	4
Gardening/flower-arranging/horticulture	3	3	4	4	3	4
Car maintenance	3	5	1	2	4	1
Photography	2	4	1	2	3	1
Carpentry/DIY	2	4	1	2	3	1
Law	2	3	2	2	2	2
Secretarial/office subjects	2	*	3	1	–	1
Mathematics/science	2	2	1	2	2	1
English: ESOL/EFL	NSR	NSR	NSR	2	2	2
Basic literacy/numeracy	NSR	NSR	NSR	1	1	1
Building trades	1	1	1	1	2	*
Religion/theology	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dance	1	1	1	1	*	2
Other subjects	12	13	11	12	13	12

*Sources over 1% only listed.

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Table 43 returns to look at the whole range of the adult population to see what subjects they are potentially interested in studying and how far the pattern has changed since 1996, using the same unprompted question and the same detailed subject categories to provide comparisons. It shows the proportion of people who name any subjects and the subjects they are interested in learning. By analysing the subject list against the learning status of respondents and against their likelihood of learning in the future, it is possible to get a reasonable view of current activity and compare it with the level of demand from the group most likely to learn in the future and thus provide some view of the size of the actual and potential market. Of course we do not know which subjects, once learnt, do not then figure again in future interests or, for example, how often people are likely to update their computer competence although we do know that some subjects become addictive. For example, more people have learnt computer studies recently and in the past and are interested in learning it in the future than are currently learning ICT (Table 44).

What is encouraging is that asking people to talk about future learning does bring out a greater variety of choices across the general spectrum of learning and includes significant numbers interested in one or the other of the creative arts, an area that was considered in more depth in the 1996 survey, The Learning Divide. At the same time, the NHS can be comforted by the positioning of nursing/health studies both among current and future learners.

Table 43: Subjects people are interested in learning about in the future, by learning status and future learning intentions

	Total	Current learners	Recent learners	Past learners	None since full-time education	Future learning in next three years	
						Likely	Unlikely
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	1,125	919	1,148	1,815	1,915	2,990
Computer studies	15	14	20	19	12	22	12
Foreign languages	8	11	10	11	4	10	7
Business/administration/ management	3	6	5	2	1	6	1
Cookery/catering	3	2	3	2	3	2	3
History/local history	3	5	4	4	2	4	3
Music	2	4	2	1	1	3	1
Nursing/health studies	4	4	4	3	3	6	2
Social sciences	1	2	2	1	1	2	1
Social work/services/care	2	2	2	2	1	3	1
Handicrafts	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Arts: painting/pottery/ sculpture/ photography	5	7	6	7	3	7	4
English language/literature	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
Accountancy	2	2	3	2	1	3	1
Engineering	2	2	3	2	1	3	1
Gardening	2	2	1	3	3	2	3
Other professional qualifications	2	4	3	1	1	4	–
Other vocational qualifications	3	3	4	3	2	4	2
Other academic subjects	2	3	3	2	1	4	1
Other leisure subjects	6	8	6	6	4	7	5
All naming subjects*	66	78	78	70	51	87	53
None/nothing	34	22	22	30	49	13	47

Table 44: Main subjects of future interest to current learners and future learners

	Total	Current learners	Future learning in next 3 years
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	1,125	1,915
Computer studies	15	14	22
Foreign languages	8	11	10
Creative arts	5	7	7
Nursing/health studies	4	4	6
Business/admin/management	3	6	6
History/local history	3	5	4
Other vocational qualifications	3	3	4
Other leisure subjects	6	8	7

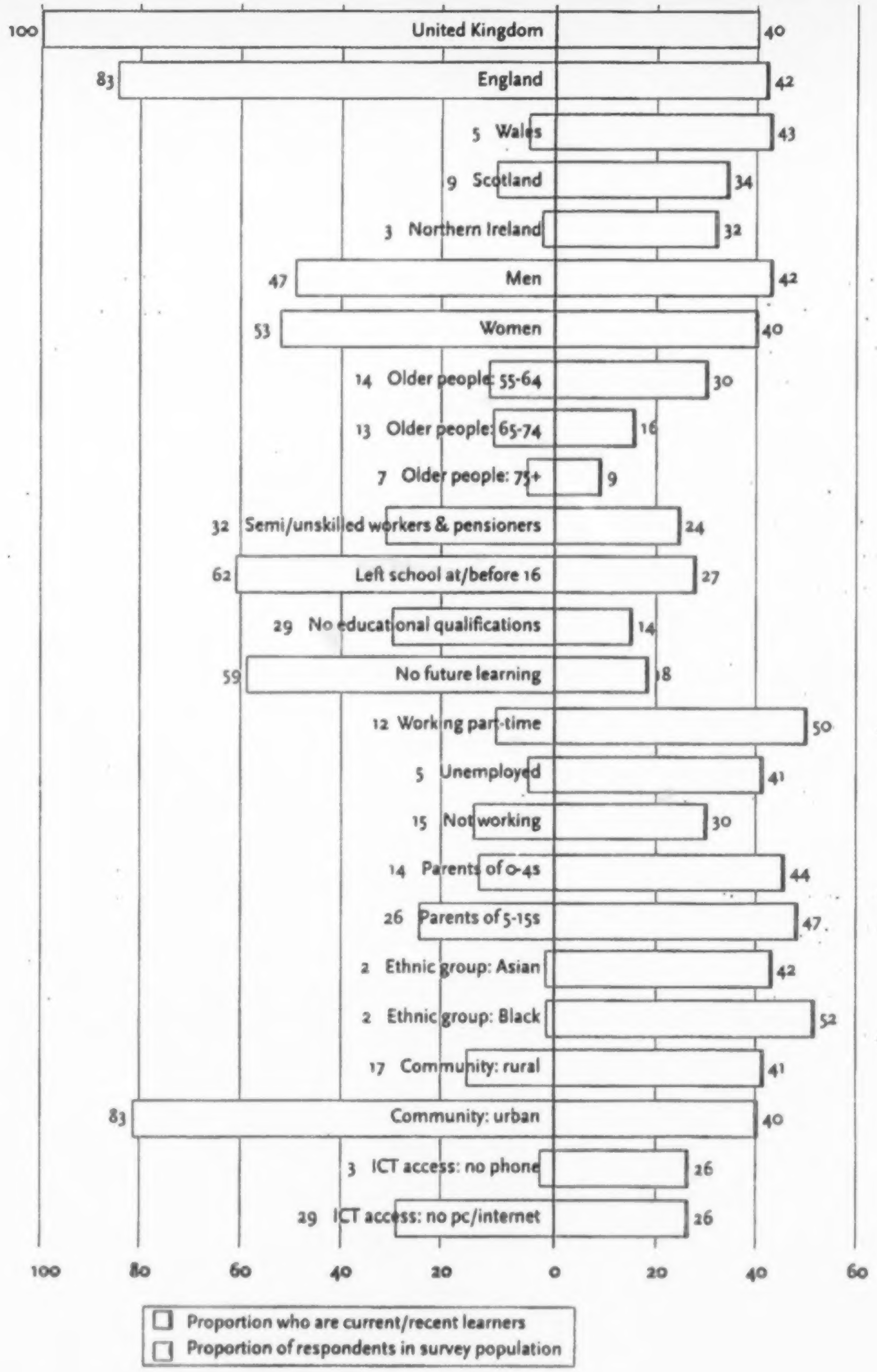
Social inclusion

Issues of social inclusion increasingly are being given priority by government, a move much welcomed by the adult education field with its roots in the Workers' Educational Association, Ruskin College, university extra-mural departments, and so on. Of course, the map identifying groups at risk is now a larger and more varied one than a century ago, and there is increasing agreement on those groups which for a variety of reasons face or have faced disadvantage. They have been extensively listed, most appropriately in relation to adult learners in *Learning for the 21st Century* (NAGCELL, 1998). The valuable report *Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal: Local Solutions* (SEU, 1999) from the Social Exclusion Unit also focuses on them, though it does not only relate its recommendations to relevant government policies on lifelong learning, but focuses on skills necessary to secure and maintain employment.

The groups focused on in Figure 1 are listed here: they all contribute to an understanding of the impact of *The Learning Divide*. To assess their importance numerically, Figure 1 shows the proportion they form of the UK population, and the proportion of that group who are current or recent learners. Of course, many of the characteristics are inter-related: for example, more older women left school early and have fewer qualifications.

A number of indicators covered in the survey inter-relate with the ability to take advantage of educational opportunities, and these are put together in this section to see what can be learnt by looking at the people in such potentially excluded groups to see what they are already learning and what factors affect and motivate them. This analysis presents a more rounded picture of the learning patterns of these groups and one which offers some unexpected positive as well as negative features.

Figure 1: Groups as a proportion of the survey population; proportions within groups who are current/recent learners



Subject of interest to the many

The rise and rise of computer studies is an exciting phenomenon, which crosses many boundaries (see Table 45). One-quarter of all learners are studying ICT. Among those who left school early, the numbers learning computing are even higher, at 27% as they are among the unemployed, at 29%. Age is no barrier with 31% of 55-64 year olds and 21% among 65-74s learning computing. The specific groups showing the highest proportions learning computing are 38% of Asians and 34% of black ethnic groups, followed by the Welsh (29%). Despite their lack of personal ICT access, 18% without a phone are learning computing, as are 11% without any personal computer/internet access.

Are there any other clues provided by the subjects of study of these groups? And are they studying for personal interest or because it may help them get a job? Apart from computing, the subject that stands out among women is nursing and health studies. Ten per cent of people overall are studying health studies with 15% of women and 4% of men: the encouraging point is that this includes 10% of those who left school early, 10% of 55-64s and 13% of those with no other qualifications. Nursing is the second highest subject studied by those working part-time (14%) and also among those not working (9%). All this provides strong evidence of the need for access routes and support for nursing training.

A negative is that a higher proportion of people working part-time pay their own fees (39%) as do those who are not working (31%).

Business/management (mentioned by 10%) overall stands out in Northern Ireland (21%) and Scotland (13%). Parents with young children put business/management higher (14%) as do men overall (12%). Other vocational qualifications, studied by 9% overall, are more important for the unemployed (12%) for semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (DEs), for those who left school early (both with 11%). Foreign languages, rating 7% overall, are most important for the two oldest age-groups, 15% of 65-74s and 27% of those aged 75+.

Study motivation

Ultimately people need to be motivated to learn, and that motivation may take a variety of forms. And it is the motivation of the learner which determines whether or not the learning is work-related or not. Similarly learning may not initially appear to be work-related, but may, as many of the EDAP-type schemes have shown, lead people on to further learning which is work-related. Adding the 17% who are studying to help in their current job to the 10% who want to get a job shows the dominance of work-related reasons among the overall population (Table 46). Among the unemployed, getting a job is, not surprisingly, the main reason for learning (32%), as it is among the Asians (33%). The next highest group mentioning getting a job are Northern Ireland learners (21%), as do 18% of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers.

Table 45: Social inclusion: subjects studied by specific groups

		Gender		Age			Socio-economic class	Age of children		Terminal age of education			Employment status			Ethnicity		ICT Access		Nation					
	Total	M	F	55-64	65-74	75+	DE	0-4	5-15	16 and under	No quals	Learning unlikely	Part time	Un-employed	Not working	Asian	Black	No phone	No PC/ Intnet	England	Wales	Scotland	Nth Ireland	Rural	Urban
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	694	663	372	1,620	720	1,329	3,130	1,466	2,990	617	249	749	121	85	164	1,466	4,217	252	442	143	853	4,202
Current/ recent learning	40	42	40	30	16	9	24	44	47	27	14	18	50	41	30	42	52	26	26	42	43	34	32	41	40
Base: all current/recent learners	2,044	980	1,064	202	104	33	394	312	630	873	197	558	306	103	224	50	44	43	375	1,744	108	147	46	351	1,693
Computer studies/IT	25	28	22	31	21	7	26	23	26	27	23	24	22	29	26	38	34	18	11	24	29	23	23	22	25
Nursing/ health studies	10	4	15	10	8	4	10	10	14	10	13	9	14	6	9	4	10	8	11	10	8	6	12	10	9
Bus/admin/ management	10	12	8	8	5	*	8	14	10	7	3	7	10	10	5	9	7	7	7	9	11	13	21	11	10
Other voc quals	9	8	10	8	*	10	11	9	11	11	8	9	10	12	7	7	6	9	10	9	8	10	2	8	9
Foreign languages	7	7	7	9	15	27	5	5	5	5	6	8	5	8	6	–	–	4	8	7	7	6	4	6	7
Other leisure subjects	7	7	7	11	13	6	7	7	7	7	10	6	7	6	10	4	–	4	9	7	9	6	9	5	7
Other acad subjects	7	7	8	6	5	3	5	7	6	6	3	8	8	8	7	4	3	8	5	7	4	9	15	9	7

Table 46: Social inclusion: reasons for learning, and progression, by specified groups

		Gender		Age			Socio-economic class	Age of children		Terminal age of education			Employment status			Ethnicity		ICT Access		Nation					
	Total	M	F	55-64	65-74	75+	DE	0-4	5-15	16 and under	No quals	Learning unlikely	Part time	Un-employed	Not working	Asian	Black	No phone	No PC/ Intnet	England	Wales	Scotland	Nth Ireland	Rural	Urban
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	694	663	372	1,620	720	1,329	3,130	1,466	2,990	617	249	749	121	85	164	1,466	4,217	252	442	143	853	4,202
Current/ recent learning	40	42	40	30	16	9	24	44	47	27	14	18	50	41	30	42	52	26	26	42	43	34	32	41	40
Base: all current/recent learners	2,044	980	1,064	202	104	33	394	312	630	873	197	558	306	103	224	50	44	43	375	1,744	108	147	46	351	1,693
Interested in the subject/ personal interest	23	23	22	30	49	56	25	13	19	20	24	21	25	19	28	28	16	18	25	23	20	18	18	18	24
To help in current job	17	19	16	20	4	–	9	21	20	19	15	18	16	4	6	3	10	1	13	16	18	27	14	22	16
To get a job	10	10	10	5	–	–	18	10	10	8	7	9	9	32	17	33	19	19	12	10	10	13	21	8	11
To get a recognised qualification	9	9	10	2	*	–	10	9	10	8	4	9	11	12	8	11	11	15	7	9	8	6	19	10	9
Not aiming at qualifications	36	37	36	67	78	78	32	34	34	43	67	47	34	19	37	18	21	26	46	37	45	35	16	35	37
Gave up before end	5	4	5	4	4	10	10	5	6	7	10	8	5	15	9	3	2	9	9	5	6	3	6	5	5

Helping in their current job is the highest reason given among learners in Scotland (27%) and those in rural areas (22%). High proportions of those with young children (21%) also want to study to help with their current job as do 19% of those who left school early and 20% of those aged 55-64. These high figures contrast with the small proportion of semi- and unskilled workers (9%) who are studying to help with their current job, indicating probably a lack of intrinsic motivation in their work.

Just under a quarter (23%) of current/recent learners are studying for personal interest and all groups, except the two oldest age-groups (both up around 50%) and parents of young children, down at 13% are within the range of 20% to 30%. Presumably young parents cannot allow themselves the 'personal quality time'!

Nine per cent overall give gaining a qualification as their reason for study, and this proportion is stable across all except those who have no qualifications where it drops to 4%, and among the older age-groups. Studying for a qualification is mentioned more by people in Northern Ireland (19%), those with no phone (15%), those who are unemployed (12%), and those working part-time, and African and Asian learners, all at 11%.

A second check on qualifications is provided by looking at whether or not the main course is being studied for a qualification. Two-thirds of 55-64-year-olds are already not aiming for qualifications, and similarly, two-thirds of those with no qualifications at all are not aiming for them. Some of this lack of instrumental motivation may well be due to age, but it may also conceal lack of confidence or poverty of aspiration. Other groups with high proportions not aiming for qualifications include those with no pc/internet (46%), Wales (45%), those unlikely to learn in the future (47%) and those who left school at 16 or under (43%). While for some people gaining a qualification is clearly a motivating factor, for others gaining that same qualification may appear a real barrier.

The importance of the workplace as a support for learning

Work does not just offer a reason for learning: for many people, the workplace also offers information about learning opportunities, encouragement and a place in which to do that learning. Getting as many people into paid work as possible is not just helpful employment policy, but indirectly is good education and training policy. The lack of a supportive workplace, and (preferably) full-time work shows as a major disadvantage in accessing lifelong learning opportunities. Twenty-five per cent of people overall found out about their course from work, with more men (28%) than women (21%) saying this (Table 47). The up-side of this is that information through the workplace reaches higher proportions of those who left school early (29%), those who say they are unlikely to study in the future (29%), and those with children under 5 (30%).

The lack of employment and an informative workplace shows up very clearly as a deficit among the disadvantaged groups. The figures for getting information through work drop from 25%

Table 47: Social inclusion: source of information about learning, and place of learning by specific groups

		Gender		Age			Socio-economic class	Age of children		Terminal age of education			Employment status			Ethnicity		ICT Access		Nation					
	Total	M	F	55-64	65-74	75+	DE	0-4	5-15	16 and under	No quals	Learning unlikely	Part time	Un-employed	Not working	Asian	Black	No phone	No PC/ Intnet	England	Wales	Scotland	Nth Ireland	Rural	Urban
Base: all respondents =100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	694	663	372	1,620	720	1,329	3,130	1,466	2,990	617	249	749	121	85	164	1,466	4,217	252	442	143	853	4,202
Current/ recent learning	40	42	40	30	16	9	24	44	47	27	14	18	50	41	30	42	52	26	26	42	43	34	32	41	40
Base: all current/recent learners	2,044	980	1,064	202	104	33	394	312	630	873	197	558	306	103	224	50	44	43	375	1,744	108	147	46	351	1,693
Found out via																									
Work	25	28	21	25	5	4	27	30	25	29	26	29	19	8	10	8	9	10	24	25	22	27	13	29	24
Friends/family	12	12	13	15	24	31	16	10	10	13	21	12	13	17	16	23	18	22	18	12	15	11	26	13	12
FE College	13	11	15	5	11	4	13	15	13	9	3	10	16	15	14	22	18	14	8	14	11	8	11	14	13
Place of Learning																									
Where I work	18	21	15	20	3	–	10	23	21	21	23	22	19	7	5	5	13	9	14	18	13	23	8	21	17
University/HE	18	18	17	7	3	3	16	11	13	7	3	16	16	13	12	48	33	20	8	18	14	18	22	16	18
At home – informal	10	11	9	16	21	37	8	10	7	9	12	10	9	7	13	2	7	9	10	10	11	7	5	10	10
Adult ed centre	8	6	10	12	12	8	8	9	9	11	8	7	9	7	16	10	12	8	10	8	13	4	13	6	9

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overall to 19% of those working part-time, 10% of those who are not working and 8% of those who are currently unemployed. The proportions for the two ethnic groups are also very low, with only 9% of the black group and 8% of Asians finding out about their course through work. The proportion for Northern Ireland is also low (13%). On the up-side, 29% of those in rural areas have found out about their course from work, as have 27% of learners in Scotland. Most important to note is that the workplace also provides a vital source of information for 24% of those who are without personal computer/internet access at all.

While fewer women than men are studying at the workplace (15% compared with 21%, and 18% overall), the workplace does offer learning opportunities to higher proportions of those with no qualifications (23%), those with young children (23%), those who left school early (21%) and the 55-64s (20%). The groups that miss out of workplace-based learning are the Asian group (5%), learners in Northern Ireland (8%), those with no phone (9%), semi- and unskilled manual workers (10%), the black ethnic group and learning in Wales (both 13%). There is a much higher proportion of work-place learning in Scotland (23%) and a rare difference between urban and rural learners shows up with more rural learners (21%) than urban learners (17%) studying in the workplace.

Accessible learning places

Recent national policies have emphasised widening access and increasing participation and have provided increased funding both for further and higher education for this purpose. Table 47 also shows that further education is clearly already the most important place of learning for the bulk of the vulnerable groups. Twenty per cent of all learners cite a further education college as their place of learning and this rises to 25% for both those who are working part-time and among those who are not working. For those who are unemployed, the proportion is 33%.

It is also encouraging that further education colleges are more important as the place of learning for the lower socio-economic groups, D and E (26%), for Northern Ireland (24%), for women (23%), and for people with children aged 5-15 (24%). Further education, however, is not reaching as many learners in Wales and Scotland (both 14%), the Asian group (12%), and two of the older groups, 55-64s and 75+ (both 13%).

Eighteen per cent of people overall are studying in higher education, and there is no difference between men and women. Northern Ireland, however, stands out with 22% in higher education. The proportion of DEs in higher education is encouragingly near that of the overall population (16%) and, though samples are small, it is interesting that as many as 48% of Asian and 33% of black groups are studying through higher education. Younger students in further and higher education are likely to account for the large proportions with no phone access in further education (24%) and higher education (20%). Apart from these categories, higher education is not an above-average provider for any of these groups.

Table 48: Social inclusion: financial support by specific groups

		Gender		Age			Socio-economic class	Age of children		Terminal age of education			Employment status			Ethnicity		ICT Access		Nation					
	Total	M	F	55-64	65-74	75+	DE	0-4	5-15	16 and under	No quals	Learning unlikely	Part time	Un-employed	Not working	Asian	Black	No phone	No PC/ Intnet	England	Wales	Scotland	Nth Ireland	Rural	Urban
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	694	663	372	1,620	720	1,329	3,130	1,466	2,990	617	249	749	121	85	164	1,466	4,217	252	442	143	853	4,202
Current/ recent learning	40	42	40	30	16	9	24	44	47	27	14	18	50	41	30	42	52	26	26	42	43	34	32	41	40
Base: all current/recent learners	2,044	980	1,064	202	104	33	394	312	630	873	197	558	306	103	224	50	44	43	375	1,744	108	147	46	351	1,693
Fees																									
No fees	26	28	25	31	34	41	33	32	29	28	37	28	25	31	34	21	17	43	26	27	34	23	7	23	27
Paid by self	30	26	35	38	58	42	23	27	28	32	28	30	39	22	31	21	32	7	35	31	30	26	42	29	31
Local authority	8	9	8	3	1	6	11	5	6	3	1	6	9	6	7	33	18	16	3	9	8	7	8	8	8

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Adult education centres, the place of learning for 8% of people overall, are more important for reaching those who are not working (16%), learners in Wales and Northern Ireland (13%), black learners (12%), for 55-64s and 65-74s (both 12%), women (10%) and skilled manual workers (10%). It is clear that while learning is still important for older people, issues of access and convenience are likely to become more important as people become less mobile. Informal learning at home (noted by 10% overall) increases with age: with 16% among 55-64s, 21% among 65-74s and 37% among 75+, an indication perhaps of the gap left by the withdrawal of much local adult education. Informal learning at home is also important for those who are not working (13%), but does not stand out for any other group.

Financial support

The payment of tuition fees falls unequally on different groups of learners (see Table 48). Some groups benefit more than others from work-supported courses or from fee remission policies. Many older people have no fees to pay (41%), either because of fee remission policies or because they are learning informally. Women, however, fare less well as fewer women (25%) than men (28%) have no fees to pay and more women pay their fees themselves (35%). More of the older age-groups (38% of 55-64s, 58% of 65-74s and 42% of 75+s) also pay their own fees, despite quite widespread fee remission policies for older people. A higher proportion of men than women (28% compared with 22%) have their fees funded by employers, which appears to coincide with more of those who left school early (26%) as well as those who do not plan to learn in the future (27%). Groups benefiting most from 'no fees' are those with no phone (43%), learners in Wales (34%), learners who are currently not working (34%) and those who are unemployed (31%). On the negative side, most Northern Ireland learners pay their own fees, as do more people who are working part-time (39%), and, importantly, those who do not have access to a personal computer/internet (35%).

There is little evidence of local authority grants targeting disadvantage: the only groups benefiting more than the norm from local authority grants are the Asian (33%) and the black groups (18%), those with no phone (16%) and a smaller proportion of DEs (11%).

Plans for future learning

Perhaps inevitably those who are unlikely to learn in the future are in the older age-groups: 76% of 55-64s, 88% of 65-74s and 94% of those who are 75+ (see Table 49). As discussed in Chapter 4 it is disappointing that the proportions of older learners are dropping despite greater longevity. Work on accessible and motivating structures of learning provision for older people is an important priority. The proportions of those unlikely to learn in the next three years are also high among those with no educational qualifications (85%), those who left school at 16 or under (71%), and those who are semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers (DEs) (70%): there is undoubtedly an inter-relationship of educational disadvantage between these groups.

Table 49: Social inclusion: future learning intentions, and obstacles, by specified groups

		Gender		Age			Socio-economic class	Age of children		Terminal age of education			Employment status			Ethnicity		ICT Access		Nation					
	Total	M	F	55-64	65-74	75+	DE	0-4	5-15	16 and under	No quals	Learning unlikely	Part time	Un-employed	Not working	Asian	Black	No phone	No PC/ Intnet	England	Wales	Scotland	Nth Ireland	Rural	Urban
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	694	663	372	1,620	720	1,329	3,130	1,466	2,990	617	249	749	121	85	164	1,466	4,217	252	442	143	853	4,202
Current/ recent learning	40	42	40	30	16	9	24	44	47	27	14	18	50	41	30	42	52	26	26	42	43	34	32	41	40
Base: all current/recent learners	2,044	980	1,064	202	104	33	394	312	630	873	197	558	306	103	224	50	44	43	375	1,744	108	147	46	351	1,693
Future learning intentions																									
Likely to learn	38	38	38	22	10	4	27	52	49	27	13	–	45	50	39	45	53	31	28	38	46	33	29	35	38
Unlikely to learn	59	59	59	76	88	94	70	45	48	71	85	100	51	47	57	50	38	62	69	59	51	64	69	61	59
Prevented by																									
Lack of interest/ motivation	27	26	28	32	39	38	34	16	18	32	43	35	25	21	25	25	18	30	29	27	22	22	50	26	27
Work/other time pressures	17	18	15	10	5	2	9	26	24	14	8	15	21	7	9	18	24	8	11	17	15	17	14	13	17
Childcare/other dependants	8	2	13	3	1	*	8	37	20	7	5	7	17	10	27	14	8	14	11	8	10	7	10	8	8
Cost/money	7	7	8	4	3	2	8	12	10	6	4	5	8	20	8	5	12	10	8	8	6	7	5	7	7
Too old/ill/ disabled	15	14	15	18	32	48	21	4	5	18	23	19	7	7	14	6	20	11	22	14	15	21	13	17	14

* Subjects over 1% only listed

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Looking at those who are likely to learn in the future, whilst 38% overall are likely to learn, this includes somewhat fewer people in rural areas (35%), fewer people in Scotland (33%) and in Northern Ireland (29%). Similarly, there are lower proportions of those with no access to a phone (31%) and no access to a personal computer/internet (28%).

Reasons which prevent people learning nowadays map across to many of the groups identified. High proportions of people with no access to a phone (30%) or personal computer/internet (29%) record lack of interest/motivation, as do 50% of learners in Northern Ireland. Twenty-four per cent of black people and 21% of those working part-time name work or other time pressures. Work and other time-pressures are also more significant for men while childcare/other care is more significant for women. Childcare and other care is relatively more important for people with children under 5 (37%) than work/other time pressures (26%). Twenty-seven per cent of those not working and 17% of those working part-time named childcare or care of other dependants, as do 14% of Asian respondents and 14% of those with no access to a phone.

The other obvious barrier, cost/money, stands out among those who are unemployed (20%), among black respondents (12%) and those with no access to a phone (10%). Financial issues are also mentioned more by those with children, 12% of those with younger children and 10% of those with older children. Reasons to do with being too old/too ill or too disabled score 15% overall and are increasingly mentioned with age: rising to 18% among 55-64s, 32% for 65-74s, and 48% for the 75+s. They are also mentioned more by people in Scotland (21%), people with no access to a personal computer/internet (22%) and black people (20%). General lack of interest/motivation, mentioned by around one-quarter, also rises to nearly 40% among older people.

A modest indicator of disadvantage is the proportion of a group which fails to complete a course. Referring back to Table 46, it can be seen that the proportion overall who fail to complete their course is 1 in 20 (5%). This rises to 15% among those who are unemployed, 10% of those with no educational qualifications and DEs, and to 9% among three groups: those who are not working, those who have no access to a phone, and those who have no access to a personal computer/internet.

Looking in this way at the responses across a number of groups generally considered to be at a disadvantage in relation to access to learning does not of course imply causal relationships between all the different variables. What it can do is shake the kaleidoscope a little and bring some of the relationships into a different perspective. Some characteristics are obviously related to other ones, for example, many older people left school early, never gained any educational qualifications and are unlikely to learn in the future. Less obvious at first sight are the benefits that arise from being in work with a supportive employer, and which for many people bring access not just to an income but also to support from employers for study – and increasingly provide support for access to telecommunications. The NAGCELL report *Changing learners, changing technologies* considered the use of new technologies for lifelong learning in some detail and argued that the potential information divide that is emerging is as dangerous as the current *Learning Divide* and that this has implications not just for the future of lifelong learning, but also for the development of an inclusive and active democratic society. The two deficits are likely to feed on each other unless there is concerted national action, and it is encouraging that a number of programmes are being put in place by Government to reach those who are currently 'information-poor'. Access to communications technologies, both at home and at work, is discussed further in the next chapter on the information divide.

The information divide

A key ingredient of social inclusion is access to information, and information is increasingly stored and communicated through communications technology rather than in lower tech ways. Global telecommunications are changing rapidly with the convergence of television, computing and telecommunications, the arrival of digital television, both satellite and terrestrial, as well as video-on-demand via ADSL links. Digital technology enables the compression of broadcast signals and allows for many more channels to be broadcast direct to the home as well as to learning centres and workplaces. It will also offer the possibility of some interactivity, provided people have with digital sets or decoders. The information superhighway has become the symbolic description of this, and indeed there are areas of personal, public, professional and commercial life which are already revolutionised by these changes.

However, access to these new communications possibilities is by no means widespread, and there is an easy assumption that they are readily available to most people, at no great cost. Indeed, their use and availability is being talked up, partly by those in the vanguard of their use such as academics, whose use is subsidised, partly to encourage people to join in and partly to increase the size of the market both for software and hardware. While communications technology in all its forms is developing fast, it has not yet reached the majority of homes, learning centres or even colleges at affordable prices: there are wide variations in ownership and access between regions, age and occupation groups. What is vital is that as technology develops, the gap between the information-rich and information-poor does not become wider and in the process increase the learning divide.

It is encouraging that following on the work of NAGCELL and others, government is taking action in a variety of ways to open up ICT and learning access not just for schools but also for adult learning (NAGCELL *op cit*, 1998). The challenge is a tough one: the focus has inevitably been on schoolchildren, but adults also need to understand the new technologies, to have personal access to them and the opportunity to acquire or keep up their skills as technologies change. Key government initiatives already in place will fund ICT learning centres open to the community through libraries, schools, the UfI and, particularly through the New Opportunities Fund for Community Access to Lifelong Learning.

Unlike the key communications devices of the previous century, the telephone, radio and television, which were provided through public investment, funded by the taxpayer and universally available at affordable prices, newer developments such cable and satellite are commercially run, and privately paid for. Current digital developments with the exception of the BBC's terrestrial television ventures are similarly positioned in the market place. A recent Henley Centre report, however, suggests that the recent rapid growth in personal computer ownership will level off in the next two years with a computer in around 40% of homes. It is clear that much of the current personal computer market consists of people upgrading their computers rather than coming in as first-time buyers. The Henley Centre report predicts that television will overtake computers as the most popular way to access the internet by as early as 2002 and that 'within a decade nearly 40 million Britons will be using their digital sets to access the world-wide web and send E-mails' (*Mirror*, 8 February, 2000).

In 1996, while most 'new' technologies for learning already existed, their availability for most people was effectively limited to institutional rather than domestic use, and was not widespread enough to be included in the 1996 survey questionnaire. By 1999, although access to telecommunications was already high on the list of political and commercial priorities, it is an indication of the speed of change that digital terrestrial broadcasting had not yet started transmission at the time of the 1999 fieldwork and therefore could not yet be asked about or included in the questionnaire. The questions asked in 1999 were designed specifically to look at individual access, and to separate out access at home from access at work or through an institution, for example, a college or school. The preceding chapter looking at social inclusion focused on two groups who are thought to be particularly at risk of being information poor: those with no telephone and those without any access to a computer or the internet at home or at work. The following tables look at the main technologies available for use, both old and new, and the pattern of access to them, since this is likely to affect an individual's ability to take advantage of learning in the future.

Table 50: ACcess to communications technology at home and at work/institution

	Access at home			Access at work/institution		
	Total	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	5,054	2,366	2,688
Telephone	95	95	95	47	55	40
Mobile phone	30	32	29	18	25	12
Pager/bleeper	5	6	4	7	10	5
Answer machine/ service	31	34	28	18	22	14
Fax machine	11	13	10	27	33	21
Computer	35	39	33	27	33	22
Internet connection	14	17	12	19	24	15
None	3	3	3	47	39	55

Table 50 looks at access to all the main communications technologies, comparing access for men and for women, either at home or through the workplace or other institutional setting. Bearing in mind the fact that these figures relate to 1999, the headline figure of personal computer access of 35% at home is around what would be expected nationally, but somewhat surprisingly it is 8% higher than access to a computer at work (27%). Men's access is 6 points higher than women's at home and 11 points higher at work. Even if access to an internet connection is growing, it is still at a relatively low level, with 14% recording access at home and 19% overall recording access at work, rising to 24% among men at work. These low levels raise questions about the increasing assumption, particularly by the press and television, that the people who contact them are typical of the general population!

Ownership of mobile phones is higher through home (30%) than at work (18%), with more men at work having a mobile phone (25%) than women (12%). Not surprisingly, answer-machines/an answering service are also accessed more at home (31%) than at work (18%). On the other hand, access to a fax is more likely to be at work, with only 11% having a fax machine at home compared with 27% at work and rising to 33% among men at work. The importance of workplace access and support has been commented on earlier. There are very few people who have access to none of these devices at home, with only 3% not even having access to a phone. Access at work cannot however be taken for granted: 47% of people overall have no access to any of these devices at work, with women (55%) again worse off than men (39%).

Table 51 looks at access to communications technologies at home analysed by gender, social class and families with children and provides a general picture of domestic access to technology. It is important to remember that there is a hard core of 10% or more people, in groups such as the unemployed, semi- and unskilled people and younger people aged 20-24 who do not have access to their own phone, and it is surprising that some survey agencies who have moved over to telephone interviewing simply omit them from their samples. The pattern of ownership of all the other devices, with the exception of pagers/bleepers, shows ascending proportions up the socio-economic classes even for the newest arrival, the mobile phone.

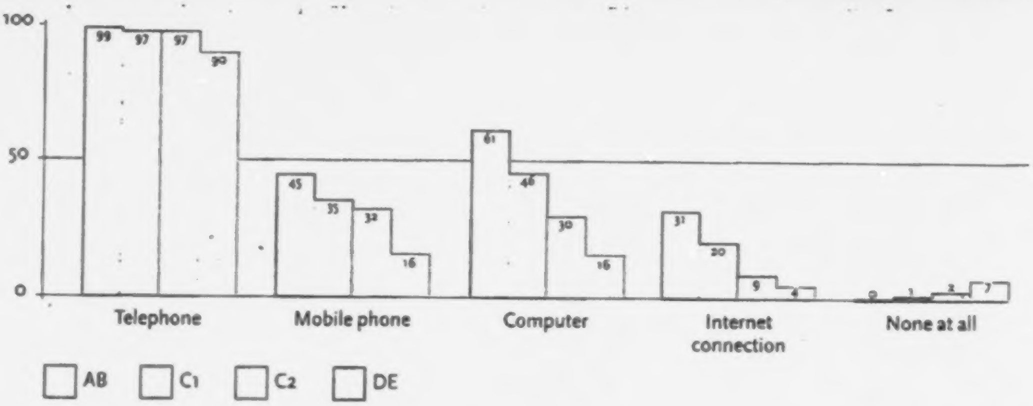
Figure 2 shows that the biggest divide is among personal computer owners, with 61% of the upper-middle classes (ABs) having one at home, compared with 16% of semi- and unskilled manual workers (DEs). Internet access shows a similar but less dramatic pattern, with 31% of ABs having an internet connection dropping to 4% among DEs.

The demographic group with the highest personal computers ownership, as previous surveys have indicated, continues to be parents with school-age children, at 52%. However, it is worth noting that while one half of ABs who have personal computers also have an internet connection, the proportion of parents of school-age children with an internet connection is appreciably lower, at 20% compared with 52%.

Table 51: Access at home to communications technology, by gender, socio-economic class and number of children

Gender				Social class				Children		
	Total	Men	Women	AB	C1	C2	DE	0-4	5-15	No children
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	914	1,398	1,121	1,620	720	1,329	3,367
Telephone	95	95	95	99	97	97	90	94	95	95
Mobile phone	30	32	29	45	35	32	16	39	39	26
Pager/bleeper	5	6	4	7	7	6	2	8	7	4
Answer machine/service	31	34	28	47	40	27	15	37	35	28
Fax machine	11	13	10	23	17	8	2	13	16	9
Home computer/pc	35	39	33	61	46	30	16	38	52	29
Internet connection	14	17	12	31	20	9	4	16	20	12
None	3	3	3	*	1	2	7	3	3	3

Figure 2: Access at home to communications technology by socio-economic class



Perhaps the most interesting picture is provided by the generational analysis shown in Table 52 which confirms the popularity of the mobile phone among younger people: 48% of 17-19-year-olds, 44% of 20-24-year-olds and 42% of 25-34-year-olds have mobile phones. Answer machines peak among the 25-44-year-olds, while access to a fax machine at home is pretty stable across the age-groups. The youngest age-group, many of whom are still studying, show the highest proportion with access to a personal computer at home (57%), followed by 52% of those aged 35-44, many of whom will also be parents. Access to a personal computer among all age-groups up to 55 is over 40%, but this drops to 26% among 55-64s and to 10% of 65-74s. While personal computer ownership is still increasing, it is not increasing fast. Many purchases are likely to be replacements

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Table 52: Access at home to communications technology, by age

	Total	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	236	347	968	923	851	694	663	372
Telephone	95	94	90	94	96	97	97	95	94
Mobile phone	30	48	44	42	38	33	23	8	
Pager/bleeper	5	8	11	8	7	5	3	1	1
Answer machine/ service	31	32	32	40	38	35	29	15	5
Fax machine	11	15	10	14	16	13	10	4	1
Home computer/pc	35	57	48	41	52	43	26	10	3
Internet connection	14	22	20	20	20	18	10	3	*
None	3	3	5	3	3	2	3	4	6

Table 53: Proportion with personal computer at home and connected to the internet, by English regions, nation and by rural/urban residence

	PC	Internet	% of pc owners connected to the internet
London	44	21	46
East Anglia	43	25	59
South East	39	17	42
East Midlands	36	14	40
North West	36	13	38
Yorkshire/Humberside	36	12	34
South West	34	13	39
West Midlands	30	12	40
North	27	10	37
England	37	15	41
Wales	33	13	41
Scotland	29	11	38
Northern Ireland	22	5	23
Rural	34	14	41
Urban	36	15	41
All	35	14	41

or upgrades. The Office of National Statistics (1997) recorded 25% ownership in 1995 and 29% in 1997. The current survey shows 35%, but with major variations in ownership between nations and regions (Table 53). The proportion of people connected to the internet is still low, at 14%, and varies from 25% connected in East Anglia and 21% in London to 10% in the North and 5% in Northern Ireland. The Table also shows the proportion connected to the internet as a percentage of the personal computer owners.

Tables 54 and 55 compare access at home and at work to the same list of devices, analysed by employment status. Access at work (Table 55) begs a lot of questions, since the nature of the access will depend on the nature of the person's work and their status in the organisation. There is pressure nationally to increase the quantity and quality of workplace-based learning, and this will often require access to learning technologies. Eighty-three per cent of those working full-time and 73% of those working part-time report that they have access to a telephone at work. Forty-seven per cent of those working full-time have access to a computer at work and two-thirds of these have access to the internet. Among those working part-time, the percentage that has access to a computer drops to 32%, but with the same proportion, two-thirds, having access to the internet. This does not necessarily mean that the internet can be accessed for purposes of education and training, or for more personal use. Particularly in the public sector, this is an area on which auditors are tough. Employer attitudes to the use of the telephone at work may need to change to take account of the possibility of positive benefit to the organisation. Unions and employers are likely to need to consider and negotiate about such access more flexibly.

Only 17% of those who are unemployed and 15% of those who are not working have any technology access at all, even use of a phone, through an institution – whether a college, voluntary organisation or some other type. For those who are retired, this drops to 7%. The proportion of women with no access to such devices at all at work as noted earlier is high, at 55%.

This chapter has focused on new technologies and has not re-rehearsed the arguments for the continued use and availability of broadcast television and radio for educational purposes. These are discussed extensively in *Pandora's Box?* (Sargant and Tuckett, 1997). A key advantage of broadcast television and radio is its universal availability, and the fact that it is free to the learner at the point of use. Cable services are now becoming more widespread, and satellite dishes can deliver programmes virtually everywhere, but both these options involve further payment. The promise of the BBC's digital Knowledge Channel is that it will be offered on all three platforms, television, satellite (courtesy of Sky) and cable, to start in summer 2000. The flaw in this development is that to receive the BBC's digital terrestrial service, it is necessary either to buy a new digital TV set, or to sign up for a commercial cable or for an On-digital set-top box.

The experience of the Open University in its earlier years provides a continuing lesson. In order that the population as a whole can have access to its learning materials at an affordable price both to the learner and to the country, the OU's policy has been to capitalise on the receiving equipment that is domestically available and already paid for in people's homes. In the early years, this included both TV and radio, to which was added the tape-recorder and then the VCR. By 1988 the price and penetration of VCRs was such that around 9% of programmes were recorded for later play-back, and increasingly the BBC transmits such programming in the night hours. The current policy allows courses to be made which require learners at home to have personal computer/internet access. The entry cost for an appropriate personal computer is still beyond many people and there is apocryphal evidence of this posing a new barrier to access to OU technology-based courses, particularly for women.

This summary provides strong arguments for the Government's move to support a variety of initiatives to set up networks of local learning centres housed in a variety of locations and accessible to different sorts of target groups. There is a clear need for such centres and the experience of the BBC's Computers don't bite campaigns have also shown there is demand, which is likely to last for some years. It will be important to monitor demand and take-up to ensure that those who are in need will be able to take advantage of the new provision particularly in the short- to medium-term.

Table 54: Access at home to communications technology, by working status

	Total	Men	Women	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired	Student
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	1,957	617	249	749	1,273	209
Telephone	95	95	95	97	98	84	92	95	95
Mobile phone	30	32	29	44	37	21	26	8	41
Pager/bleeper	5	6	4	8	5	4	3	1	8
Answer machine/service	31	34	28	42	37	19	26	14	31
Fax machine	11	13	10	17	16	5	7	3	16
Computer/pc	35	39	33	48	47	25	29	11	72
Internet connection	14	17	12	21	20	7	11	3	28
None	3	3	3	1	1	13	6	4	1

Table 55: Access to communications technology at work or at an institution, by working status

	Total	Men	Women	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	Not working	Retired	Student
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,054	2,366	2,688	1,957	617	249	749	1,273	209
Telephone	47	55	40	83	73	11	11	4	63
Mobile phone	18	25	12	38	17	1	3	1	17
Pager/bleeper	7	10	5	16	8	–	1	*	7
Answer machine/ service	18	22	14	36	23	1	3	1	11
Fax machine	27	33	21	53	33	5	4	1	24
Computer/pc	27	33	22	47	32	7	8	1	73
Internet connection	19	24	15	31	21	4	4	1	78
None	47	39	55	12	21	83	85	93	9

Chapter Eighteen

Research background and issues

NIACE has had a long-term commitment to mapping the pattern of adult participation in formal and informal education and training provision. In part, its focus on surveys of the general adult population has been a response to the poverty of data collected and held by a number of providers, particularly in less formal provision. In part, however, it has been in recognition that adults learn where they can, often fitting in to programmes designed for younger learners, and fitting study into a complex web of other demands on their time.

Earlier surveys reach back to 1936 when WE Williams, the Secretary of NIACE's predecessor, the British Institute of Adult Education, and AE Heath undertook a postal survey of the educational history of over 500 members of adult classes from the most varied occupations and areas (Williams and Heath, 1936). In 1953, Ernest Green reported on a postal survey entitled *Adult Education: why this apathy?* returned by almost 2,000 people, again mainly adult students (Green, 1957). Joseph Trenamen, Secretary of the BBC, undertook a related survey in 1955-57 researching attitudes of the general adult public in the London area to educational communications and ideas, linking these to people's access to sources of information and ideas, and to the ways those various sources combine to influence attitudes (Trenamen, 1957). The most comprehensive of the early surveys, *Adult Education: adequacy of provision*, was commissioned by the DES in 1966 and carried out by the National Institute of Adult Education (NIACE's immediate predecessor) under a steering group chaired by the then Minister, Christopher Chataway, and prepared and edited by Edward Hutchinson (NIAE, 1970). Whilst not a national sample, it assembled the results of 3,549 interviews with non-participants and participants in non-vocational adult education courses in seven local education authority areas in England and Wales.

The current survey is the fifth of a sequence of more obviously comparable national surveys, and the second to include Northern Ireland. The recent sequence of surveys has been designed to look broadly at adult participation in education and training and has pursued a number of comparable themes, though the emphases have changed as the social, educational and policy environment has changed. The first of these was entitled *Adults: their educational experience and needs* (ACACE, 1982) and the second *Learning and 'leisure'* (Sargant, 1991). The third study, for NIACE, was funded by the then Employment Department and focused more closely on adult education and local provision, *What price the Learning Society?* (NIACE, 1994). The fourth study, for NIACE, was funded by the Department for Education and Employment, and included the first full study of participation in Northern Ireland, with national studies of Scotland and Wales, giving the most comprehensive coverage of the United Kingdom, *The Learning Divide* (Sargant *et al*, NIACE, 1997).[1] Two other key studies were commissioned in 1989 and 1993 by the Employment Department focusing specifically on work-related vocational education and training and concentrating on those currently in the labour market, aged 16-54. These were *Training in Britain* (Training Agency, 1989) and *Individual commitment to learning* (Park, 1994). Two further surveys are not discussed here, though they provide relevant background, *Employee commitment and the skills revolution* (Gallie and White, 1993) was limited to vocational education or training among employees, and *Choosing to Learn* (Woodley *et al*, 1987) focused on adult learners in a wide variety of institutional contexts rather than on the general adult population. In addition, Sargant's *Learning for a Purpose* (1993) mapped out participation in education and training among the main minority ethnic groups, since the overall population surveys do not provide large enough samples of minority ethnic communities for detailed analysis.

The Basic Skills Agency (formerly ALBSU) has also undertaken regular surveys of skills levels and participation in literacy, numeracy and of the need for provision of English for speakers of other languages.

NIACE's series of quantitative studies has also been complemented by qualitative research into the barriers affecting adults' access to learning opportunities, and into effective strategies for overcoming barriers. The seminal work in this sequence was Veronica McGivney's 1990 study, *Education's for Other People: Access to Education for Non-participant Adults.*

There are two other distinguishing features of the NIACE research strategy: the need to cover regional differences and provide more detailed analyses of sub-groups of the population; and the task of mapping the learning activities of the whole community and not just those active in the labour force. Both of these require a large sample size and it is the reconciliation of these purposes within the available funding which dictates the choice of research strategy.

It is always difficult to make comparisons between different surveys carried out by different organisations for different purposes, but these have been attempted wherever possible. In particular, in order to provide greater comparability in the critical issue of participation rates, the 1996 survey by NIACE adopted the broader definition of learning developed by SCPR (1994) for its study. Previous NIACE surveys had followed the 1980 ACACE research, which had been designed at that time to include study in its broadest sense, whether full- or part-time, and whether at work or elsewhere, since the completion of full-time education. The 1990 survey, in addition, asked a question designed to elicit information about informal learning along the lines of the theories implicit in the work of Allen Tough (1971), and discussed in some detail in *Learning and 'leisure'* (Sargant, 1991).

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[1] The initial section of this chapter is mainly drawn from *The Learning Divide*, by the same author

The questions used in 1990 were:

> Are you studying currently, or have you done any kind of study, learning or practising part-time or full-time, at work or elsewhere since you completed your full-time education?
>
> Are you trying to learn about anything else at the moment, or trying to teach yourself anything, at work, home with friends or in a club - for example, cooking, how to use a computer, photography, etc?

The 1994 MORI survey adapted the first question slightly, asking about 'classes' rather than 'study' and did not add a supplementary question. Its phrasing was:

> Are you studying currently, or have you done any kinds of classes or learning part- or full-time since you completed your full-time education, either at work or elsewhere?

SCPR describes itself as taking

> 'NIACE's definition of learning as its starting point, ... (but that it then) ... structured key questions on learning in a different way ... respondents were given a more detailed description of what was meant by learning and were taken through this description in a more methodical and structured manner than was possible in the NIACE survey. Through this it was hoped that the respondents would have had more time to consider whether they had undertaken any of the activities described as examples of learning' (SCPR, 1994).

The question used in the 1993 survey by SCPR (SCPR, 1994), and by agreement adopted by NIACE for *The Learning Divide* (Sargant *et al*, 1997), read as follows:

> This card describes the sorts of learning people might do. Could you read the card please while I go through it with you. As the card says, learning can mean practising, studying or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. Learning can also be called education or training. You can do it regularly (each day or each month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full- or part-time, done at home, at work, or in another place like a college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. We are interested in any learning you have done whether or not it is continuous. Have you done any kind of learning activity in the last three years?

Despite the use of the same question, the results of the surveys did appear to cover somewhat different territories, though to a lesser extent than in earlier surveys, and these differences were discussed in more detail in *The Learning Divide* (1997). Of course, those surveys were three years apart in time. What is imponderable is the effect of the focus on the SCPR survey on vocational and work-related learning compared with the more general perspective of adult learning taken by NIACE, and whether or not the difference in the way the questionnaire and the actual leading question were administered could have had an effect.

While the SCPR survey was designed to focus on work-related learning, it did also use the broad question described. It clearly picked up more short work-related episodes apparently omitted from the NIACE surveys. At the same time, many people learning for longer periods in the NIACE survey are also studying for work-related reasons and may have been missed out of the SCPR survey. The conclusion may well be that both surveys underestimate the total quantity of current learning. Certainly the attempt to separate work-related learning from other forms of learning continues to cause statistical and inferential difficulties, particularly in respect of future intentions to learn.

The fieldwork for the most recent government-commissioned survey, the *National Adult Learning Survey* (DfEE, 1998), took place in spring 1997 and developed interesting questionnaire approaches which, however, make direct comparisons with the NIACE sequence of surveys difficult, though the general pattern of findings tell much the same story. The NALS survey utilises, as noted earlier, very detailed sequences of question-probing and distinguishes carefully between taught and non-taught learning, and between work-related and non-work-related learning. Their similarly large initial sample has also been used as the basis for a valuable follow-up study, referred to earlier (La Valle and Finch, 1999).

After discussion, the NIACE decision was not to change the questionnaire again for the 1999 survey, but to replicate the 1996 study as closely as possible in order to be clear about benchmarking and other comparison measures as new government policies come into effect.

Participation as a research issue

The national sequence of surveys described earlier in this chapter, in which NIACE and its predecessor bodies played an important role, has established the importance of participation as a key element of research in the field of adult learning, and ensured that such research is recognised as important by government. The 1997 *Adult Learning Survey* (NALS) was a development from the SCPR (1994) survey discussed earlier and sought particularly to understand informal learning, work-based learning and non-participation. Information from this research has been instrumental in formulating the idea of a learning participation target, and the Government is committed to continuing such research in order to measure the attainment of such a target. Similarly *Learning for a purpose* (Sargant, 1993), a NIACE-led study of participation in education and training by adults from different ethnic minorities, has led to a further DfEE-sponsored study on ethnic participation to be published in 2000.

Mapping patterns of participation, of course, only tells part of the story, though it is a necessary first stage in understanding the terrain. *The Learning Divide* (1997), in its chapter on continuing research issues, noted the need to look in more detail at regional differences, since the differences in participation raise issues, among others, of access and equity. The work done since by Schuller and Field (1999), comparing participation in Northern Ireland and Scotland, is important in this regard. With devolution and the growing importance of regional government, it is necessary to map regional provision and participation more effectively, requiring larger sample sizes, in order to assist in more active local and regional planning. Such mapping, though meeting the individual needs of local Learning and Skills Councils, will also need to include some common core of comparable information in order to enable useful comparisons to be made across the UK. This was an important lesson made clear in numerous attempts to monitor, compare and transfer good practice through the TEC national network.

A similar need for larger samples or more purposive sampling arises with the need to understand more about the participation and learning needs of ethnic minorities at regional and local levels as they tend to cluster in particular localities. Another issue raised in the 1997 text was the decision to distinguish between taught and non-taught courses. An increasing number of people are studying part-time, often using open or distance learning materials, and may do their study in more than one place. It is not clear at what stage open learning using resource materials designed to be learner-centred and used for independent learning should be classified as taught or non-taught courses. Similarly, informal learning may well be recognised through accreditation of prior experience/learning schemes, but there has not been enough contemporary longitudinal work on informal learning and its role as acting as a gateway to continuing learning to understand its significance.

There continues to be a divide between academics and researchers who work in open and distance learning and those working with adults in conventional institutions even though many conventional institutions are now adding newer modes to their provision. There has typically been little transfer of theory or practice in the teaching and learning of adults from the OU, which works with thousands of adults and has a Grade 5-rated bespoke research institute to help with this task, to the increasing number of conventional institutions with mature students, many of whom study part-time.

Even an important text such as McGivney's study *Education's for Other People* (NIACE, 1990) excludes from study correspondence colleges and other commercial institutions as well as open and distance learning, including the OU, thus excluding much evidence of the barriers of time and place and of the value of provision which transcends time and place. The OU itself is guilty of producing texts through its Educational Studies faculty which fail to acknowledge or learn from other research work on teaching and learning carried out within the OU's IET and other research groups. These tendencies are variously known as 'the not invented here' syndrome, or the creative imperative rather than being recognised as re-inventing the wheel. Either way, adult learners do not benefit as much as they should.

Field (1999), in an article on participation commenting on the current tide of debate over lifelong learning, confirms the importance of participation as a topic for research. He draws attention to the wider community of policy-makers, managers, teachers and learners both in Britain and overseas who are now concerned with the issues of lifelong learning. He goes on to comment:

> "Within this wider shift, one topic stands out from the others: participation. As lifelong learning has moved up the policy agenda, the question of who participates and who does not (and why) is posed ever more sharply. Research will also want to examine why this is such an important question for policy-makers and providers."

He argues that Britain is now relatively well-served in the volume and quality of research about participation but goes on to suggest that this raises policy issues implicit in the suggestion that '*everyone* must constantly acquire new skills and knowledge, in order to innovate and adapt in their present job or to enhance their employability should they need a new job... the more this argument is accepted by government and others, the wider the gulf between "knowledge rich" and "knowledge poor" so that considerable efforts have to be devoted to social inclusion strategies.' This proposition parallels many of the arguments put forward in the NAGCELL reports, and in the research evidence adduced in the two preceding chapters of this report, which focus on social inclusion and the information divide.

Field (1999) also comments usefully on other needs and omissions: firstly, the omission from research of what he calls 'coerced learning', the learning which is required by employers or professions, whether the learners want to do it or not; secondly, the need to understand better why some people define themselves firmly as non-learners; thirdly, the effect of focusing on the accumulation of individual educational capital rather than larger returns to social capital.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the major contribution made to the field by the ESRC's Learning Society Research Programme, directed by Frank Coffield, and much of the work is still emerging. Field and Schuller (1999), in a helpful paper, review and comment on this programme, noting that adult practitioners were in a minority among those involved in the programme and identifying a number of future research priorities which emerge from the work so far. They summarise under seven headings an agenda which includes:

- definitions of the field
- participation: distribution and change
- learners' environments
- learners' careers
- time and money
- complementarity and competition
- the knowledge base.

Finally in this brief commentary, it is worth drawing attention to an interesting project in Wales (Gorard *et al*, 1999) which draws both on a large-scale study of individual patterns of participation in lifelong learning and on the oral history of the South Wales Coalfield Archive. They suggest that most of the factors that predict future participation in lifelong learning are already in place by the time children start primary school, and that only around 15% of the likelihood of lifelong learning is explained by what happens after they leave primary school. From these patterns of participation they have developed five lifelong learning 'trajectories' with which, through the use of logistic regression analysis, they are able to include a wide range of variables and therefore offer projections of participation and explain variances in them. The long perspective provided by their research is fascinating, and is of course rooted in a particular social and economic context, although interestingly it does not mention the role of the 11+, a key determinant of people's educational future, particularly in South Wales, where getting to grammar school was the main way to get out of the pits. There is no reason to doubt their analysis, but it does not come as a surprise to students of sociology brought up on *Social mobility in Britain* (Glass, 1954) and the Nuffield studies. The introduction to Hall and Glass's chapter *Education and social mobility* states:

> "First, the type and level of education attained by the subjects who co-operated in the investigation, depended very heavily upon the social status (as measured in terms of occupation) of the subject's fathers. Secondly taking male subjects only, the relationship between parental and filial status was seen to be positive at all levels of the status hierarchy, and especially high at the upper levels. Moreover a similar and powerful relationship was found in studying movements over three generations."

It is not surprising that social mobility was a main pre-occupation for researchers at the start of the Open University. The OU was expected to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and there was much policy and journalistic interest in the students and their background and early complaints that they were already middle class, in the sense that there was a high proportion of teachers among the early students. Research showed clearly that whereas they had come from working-class backgrounds, they had displayed a quite unique degree of inter-generational mobility and also of intra-generational mobility, though the patterns for men were different than for women. The teachers were not graduates but two-year certificated teachers destined to teach in primary or secondary modern schools. The research question for the OU was therefore more to do with how and why had so many people defied predictions and bucked the trend. The answers were different for men and women, as discussed in *A degree of difference* (McIntosh *et al*, 1976). These issues are still with us, but they appear to be of less interest to current researchers than to the sociologists of that time.

It is worth noting that the Welsh study is looking back over the same period of time as Glass and his colleagues' classic work. The social research field, however, has a shorter collective memory than is demanded by scientific research, and these inter-disciplinary connections are made less often, particularly if the research is specific to a particular discipline. The Learning Society series contains research from a variety of disciplines and it will be interesting to see how far the knowledge base developed is capable of being synthesised, or if academics are interested in such a challenge.

The return of educational research to the public agenda

The change of government has not only placed lifelong learning up the educational agenda, but also put social and educational research back on the agenda. David Blunkett both castigated and encouraged social researchers, and among them educational researchers, recently in a key speech on the relationship between social science and government.

> I believe passionately that having access to the lessons from high quality research can and must vastly improve the quality and sensitivity of the complex and often constrained decisions we, as politicians, have to make.
>
> David Blunkett, ESRC Lecture, "Influence or irrelevance: can social science improve government?" 2 February 2000.

Educational research has, indeed, faced a number of difficulties over the years. First, most academic research is funded through and driven by academic disciplines, (psychology, sociology, economics, and so on) and education is not a discipline as such, but rather an applied research area which needs to draw on each of these and also some others. Second, most disciplines favour or utilise particular research methodologies. For example, psychology uses experimental design/test and measurement and attitude scaling among others, and anthropology uses participant observation. The large-scale surveys used in social research have fallen somewhat out of favour among academics, partly because they are too expensive for academic researchers to mount.

Education, as an applied area of research, needs above all to analyse a problem and choose the most appropriate technique to research that problem. The move to evidence-based policy is helpful as it focuses on evidence which addresses the policy decision to be made, though its origins, stemming from clinical and medical research, are of randomised control trials, not particularly suitable for uncontrollable adult learners!

A more serious issue is that the field has, for many years, been dominated by schools' interests and has not been extended to the education of adults and this has carried through to funding and research structures. Even the newly-set up Education Research Forum is dominated by people associated with interests in the schools system. There is only one member from further education, let alone anyone from lifelong learning. For most people education is still synonymous with schooling.

There have been continued attempts to find an acceptable term to distinguish between schooling or education for children and young people at the start of their lives and what might follow on from that initial education whether it finished at school, college or university. While the

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debate has continued for a long time and still generates discussion matter for journal articles (Field and Schuller, 1999) in itself it is somewhat sterile, and sometimes destructive, as it allows one faction or one set of institutions to be played off against another. In the 1970s, whilst OECD favoured recurrent education, UNESCO preferred 'education permanente' and North America adopted 'lifelong learning' notably utilised in relation to Mondale's ill-fated plans for Lifelong Learning. Debate in the UK in the 1970s was given impetus by the Open University's Venables Report of its Committee on Continuing Education (1976) and the setting up in 1977 by the then Labour Government of the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education, chaired by Richard Hoggart.

While the semantic debate over the last two decades continued to be quite lively, interest in it did not translate into general policy or financial commitment in the 1980s, though there were advances on the training and vocational education front which helped adults, mainly led by the MSC and its related agencies under the leadership of Geoffrey Holland. 'Continuing education' over those years became coterminous with continuing professional development and government's focus was on work-related education rather than on a more generous view of adult learning, with funding streams tending to favour the young. The setting up of the ESRC's Learning Society programme in 1994 came as a significant breakthrough.

Field and Schuller (1999) also comment on the explosion of public interest in lifelong learning in the second half of the 1990s, both among policy-makers and practitioners, and suggest that the language used in a number of countries 'was more or less distant from the older, more established discourses of adult and/or continuing education: notably the use of the term 'lifelong learning' and the phrase 'The Learning Society'. They go on to ask what the new language signals for research or is it just a modish trend, a re-branding, or does it denote a more substantial change? It is only necessary to look at the different ways in which adult education, continuing education and lifelong learning are translated and used in a number of other countries to see that the difference in terminology has more to do with language, culture and fashion than with deep philosophical differences.

The main difficulty, hopefully now resolved, was to gain general recognition for a generic term, and increasingly the term used is indeed Lifelong Learning. The key difference is at a more fundamental level and has to do with the related shift achieved in the 1980s away from using 'education and training' and replacing it with 'adult learning'. The motive for this was not only to shift the focus on to the learner and away from provision but, more important, to avoid the constant differentiation between 'training' ('good') and 'education' ('less good'). The implicit victory is to make clear that it is the learner's motivation that determines whether learning is vocational or not, rather than the decision of the provider or the funder.

David Blunkett's ESRC speech provides welcome encouragement to social researchers, and the setting up of the first two dedicated research centres on the wider benefits of learning and the economics of education are particularly relevant for lifelong learning, as will be the centre on

ICT in education and the Centre for Evidence-informed Policy and Practice.

As choice is given to learners who no longer have to study in given times or places, then the loss of their control and status may well become threatening to adult educators who will need to change the way they work and offer learning in different ways. Some may be threatened by losing control and status, but others may find the new challenge liberating and exciting. Researchers, in parallel, will similarly face new challenges and need to consider wider issues, be less devoted to single disciplines and draw on a more extensive armoury of research strategies and techniques.

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RSGB's Omnibus Survey and random location sampling method

Method

The information presented in this report was obtained as part of RSGB's General Omnibus Survey for January and February 1999, together with Ulster Marketing Surveys ad hoc research. Appendix 6 contains a copy of the questionnaire.

Sample

The survey was based on a representative sample of 5,150 adults i.e. males and females aged 16 or over. They were selected from a minimum of 325 sampling points by a random location method, which is described here.

Fieldwork

Respondents were interviewed at home by interviewers using computer-assisted questionnaires organised by SFR's Regional Managers and UMS's Field Controllers according to RSGB's detailed instructions about the survey and administration procedures. The back checking procedures which were carried out met the requirements of the Market Research Society Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS).

The interviews took place during the period 27 January - 14 February 1999.

Data Processing

After coding and editing the data, weights were used to allow for sample variations. The weighting scheme took account of the boost interviews by down-weighting the boosted regions back to their normal proportions in the UK populations. Details of the weighted and unweighted samples are shown in Appendix 4.

RSGB Random Location Sampling Method

A unique sampling system has been developed by Taylor Nelson Sofres for its own use. Utilising 1991 UK Census small area statistics and the Post Office Address File (PAF), the eligible area of the country has been divided into 600 areas of equal proportion. The areas within each Standard Region were stratified into population density bands, and within band in descending order by percentage of population in socio-economic Grades I and II.

To maximise the statistical accuracy of Omnibus sampling, sequential waves of fieldwork are allocated systematically across the sampling frame so as to ensure maximum geographical dispersion. The 600 primary sampling units are allocated to 25 sub-samples of 24 points each, with each sub-sample in itself being a representative drawing from the frame. For each wave of Omnibus fieldwork a set of sub-samples is selected so as to provide the number of sample points required (typically c. 130 for 2,000 interviews). Across sequential waves of fieldwork all sub-samples are systematically worked, thereby reducing the clustering effects on questionnaires asked for two or more consecutive weeks.

Each primary sampling unit is divided into two geographically distinct segments, each containing, as far as possible, equal populations. The segments comprise aggregations of complete postcode sectors. Within each half (known as the A and B halves) postcode sectors have been sorted by the percentage of the population in socio-economic groups I and II. One postcode sector from each primary sampling unit is selected for each Omnibus, alternating on successive selections between the A and B halves of the primary sampling unit, again to reduce clustering effects. For each wave of interviewing each interviewer is supplied with two blocks of 100 addresses, drawn from different parts of the sector. Addresses are contacted systematically with three doors being left after each successful interview.

Interviewing is restricted to after 2 p.m. on weekdays or all day at the weekend. To ensure a balanced sample of adults within effective contacted addresses, a quota is set by sex (male, female, housewife, female non-housewife); within female housewife, presence of children and working status and within men, working status.

A guide to socio-economic class

Grade 'A' Households: the upper middle class

Informants from Grade 'A' households constitute about 3% of the total. The head of the household is a successful business or professional person, senior civil servant, or has considerable private means. A young person in some of these occupations who is not yet fully established may still be found in Grade 'B', though s/he eventually should reach Grade 'A'.

In country or suburban areas, 'A' grade households usually live in large detached houses or in expensive flats. In towns, they may live in expensive flats or town houses in the better parts of town.

Grade 'B' Households: the middle class

Grade 'B' informants account for about 10% of the total. In general, the heads of 'B' grade households will be quite senior people but not at the very top of their profession or business. They are quite well-off, but their style of life is generally respectable rather than rich or luxurious. Non-earners will be living on private pensions or on fairly modest private means.

Grade 'C1' Households: the lower middle class

Grade 'C1' constitutes about 24% of total informants. In general it is made up of the families of small tradespeople and non-manual workers who carry out less important administrative, supervisory and clerical jobs, i.e. what are sometimes called 'white-collar' workers.

Grade 'C2' Households: the skilled working class

Grade 'C2' consists in the main of skilled manual workers and their families. It constitutes about 30% of informants. When in doubt as to whether the head of the household is skilled or unskilled, check whether s/he has served an apprenticeship; this may be a guide, though not all skilled workers have served an apprenticeship.

Grade 'D' Households: the semi-skilled and unskilled working class

Grade 'D' consists entirely of manual workers, generally semi-skilled or unskilled. This grade accounts for 25% of families. It also includes non-earners: retired people who before retirement would have been in 'D' Grade and have pensions other than State Pensions, or have other private means.

Grade 'E' Households: those at lowest level of subsistence

Grade 'E' consists of old age pensioners, widows, and their families, casual workers and those who, through sickness or unemployment, are dependent on social security systems. They constitute about 8% of all informants.

Notes on the tables

The sample covers the adult population of the United Kingdom, aged 17 and over. The sample used is specified in each table, and details of the weighted and unweighted samples are given in Appendix 4.

Figures in the tables are from the 1999 RSGB/NIACE survey unless otherwise indicated.

The 1996 survey was carried out for NIACE by the GALLUP organisation.

Tables are percentaged vertically unless otherwise specified.

All tables are based on weighted totals. Researchers who wish to pursue any particular topic can obtain the necessary basic figures from the set of full analyses at NIACE.

In tables, * indicates less than 0.5 per cent but greater than zero, and – indicates zero. NSR indicates not separately recorded.

Percentages equal to or greater than 0.5 have been rounded up in all tables (e.g. 0.5 per cent = 1 per cent, 36.5 per cent = 37 per cent).

Owing to the effect of rounding weighted data, the weighted basis shown in the tables may not always add up to the expected base.

In a number of questions, respondents were invited to give more than one answer: and so percentages may well add up to more than 100%.

Some sub-questions are filtered, that is, they are only asked of a proportion of respondents. Where questions are filtered, the base of the relevant groups is indicated at the beginning of that table and percentages are derived from that base.

Regional analyses: inevitably, the number of sampling points in any one region is small. This fact should be taken into account when interpreting regional differences.

Analysis of weighted and unweighted samples

Sex, age, socio-economic grade

Base: all adults aged 17 and over	Unweighted		Weighted	
Total	5,205	100%	5,054	100%
Sex				
Men	2,242	43	2,366	47
Women	2,963	57	2,688	53
Age				
16-24	612	12	583	12
25-34	1,037	20	968	19
35-44	1,009	19	923	18
45-54	845	16	851	17
55+	1,702	33	1,729	34
Socio-economic grade				
AB	858	16	914	18
C1	1,334	26	1,298	28
C2	1,156	22	1,121	22
DE	1,857	36	1,620	32

Analysis of sample: Region

Base: all adults aged 17 and over	Unweighted		Weighted	
Total	5,205	100%	5,054	100%
Standard Region				
London	553	11	603	12
South East	876	17	953	19
South West	456	9	418	8
East Anglia	150	3	183	4
East Midlands	341	7	359	7
West Midlands	473	9	456	9
North West	520	10	558	11
Yorkshire and Humberside	440	8	424	8
North	303	6	264	5
England	4,112	79	4,217	83
Northern Ireland	152	3	143	3
Scotland	458	9	442	9
Wales	483	9	252	5

Standard Regions

1. Yorkshire/Humberside
2. North – Cumbria, Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland, Tyne and Wear
3. South West – Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire
4. East Midlands – Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire
5. South East – Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, Kent
6. East Anglia – Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire
7. West Midlands – Hereford, Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire
8. North West – Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside
9. Wales
10. Scotland
11. Greater London

The questionnaire

SHOW SCREEN:

I would now like to talk about the sort of learning that people do.

Learning can mean practising, studying, or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. Learning can also be called education or training. You can do it regularly (each day or month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full-time or part-time, done at home, at work, or in another place like college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. I am interested in any learning you have done, whether or not it was finished.

Q.1 Which of the following statements most applies to you?
01: I am currently doing some learning activity now.
02: I have done some learning activity in the last 3 years
03: I have studied/learnt but it was over 3 years ago
04: I have not studied/learnt since I left full time education
(DK)

(If coded 01 or 02 go to Q.2a, others go to Q.13)

Q.2a What subjects are you learning about/have you most recently learnt about?
01: Accountancy
02: Basic reading/writing/literacy
03: Basic maths/numeracy
04: Building trades
05: Business/administration/management
06: Car maintenance
07: Carpentry/DIY
08: Computer studies/information technology/using the internet
09: Cookery/catering
10: Dance
11: Dressmaking/tailoring/needlecraft
12: Driving (including HGV)
13: English as a second or additional language
14: English as a foreign language
15: English language/literature
16: Engineering (electronic/mechanical/construction)
17: Foreign languages (excluding Welsh)
18: Gardening/horticulture/garden design
19: Handicrafts
20: Law
21: History/local history
22: Music
23: Nursing/first aid/health studies
24: Arts: including painting/pottery/sculpture/design
25: Photography

26: Religion/bible studies/theology
27: Science/maths/statistics
28: Shorthand/typing/office training
29: Social sciences
30: Social work/social services/community care
31: Sports/gymnastics/keep fit
32: Welsh language
33: Other professional qualifications (specify)
34: Other vocational qualifications (specify)
35: Other academic subjects (specify)
36: Other 'leisure' subjects (specify)

Don't know

Q.2b What is the main subject you are learning about/ have most recently learnt about?
(List as at Q.2a filtered on answers at Q.2a)

Q.3 How did you find out about **(insert responses at Q.2b)**?
Probe: Any other ways?

01: Friends/family
02: Work mates
03: Printed publicity (posters/leaflets etc) delivered to home
04: Printed publicity (posters/leaflets etc) elsewhere
05: Newspaper adverts
06: College: further education, tertiary, 6th form college
07: Adult education centre/evening institute
08: University/college of higher education/open university
09: Community centre
10: Workers Educational Association (WEA)
11: School
12: Trade union/professional association
13: Public library
14: TEC (Training and Enterprise Council)/LEC
15: Voluntary organisation
16: Work/employer/training officer
17: Careers service/guidance service
18: Job centre/employment service
19: Town hall/council offices
20: Telephone helpline/Learning Direct
21: Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)/advice centre
22: Local radio
23: Television
24: Internet/world wide web
25: Other (specify)
Don't know

Q.4 On this screen there are some reasons people have given for why they choose to learn about a certain subject or skill. Thinking of your learning of **(insert answer at Q.2b)** which of the following best describe the reason you started learning?

01: To get a job
02: To get a job with a different employer
03: To change the type of work I do
04: To gain a promotion
05: To gain a rise in earnings

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06: To make my work more satisfying
07: To help me get onto a future course of learning
08: To develop myself as a person
09: To get a recognised qualification
10: To help in my current job
11: I enjoy learning and study
12: I am interested in the subject/personal interest
13: To meet people
14: I had no choice – employer chose
15: I had no choice – benefit requirement
16: Only type of learning available
Don't know

Q.5 Where is the main place that you do this learning/did this learning?

01: Where I work
02: Employer's training centre
03: Private training centre
04: Job centre or job club
05: Adult education centre/evening institute
06: Further education college/tertiary/6th form college
07: Community centre/leisure centre
08: Workers' Educational Association class
09: Skill centre
10: Trade union
11: Women's Institute/Townswomen's guild
12: School
13: University/college of higher education/open university
14: With an informal group e.g. women's group/church
15: Voluntary organisation e.g. pre-school alliance
16: At home – structured correspondence course or open learning
17: At home – informal learning
18: At home – from radio/TV
19: At home – using a computer, CD Rom, internet
20: Other educational institution
21: Other (specify)
Don't know

Q.6 Thinking about (**insert answer at Q.2b**), about how many hours a week do you spend on learning/studying/did you spend on learning/studying?

01: Less than 1 week
02: 1 week - 1 month
03: Over 1 month - 3 months
04: Over 3 months - 6 months
05: 7 - 12 months
06: Over 1 - 2 years
07: Over 2 years
Don't know

Q.7 Thinking about (**insert answer at Q.2b**), about how many hours a week do you spend on learning/study/did you spend on learning/studying?

Specify hours
Don't know

Q.8 What qualifications, if are, are **(were if coded 02 at Q.1)** you aiming towards?

01: None/not aiming for qualification
02: GCSE
03: A level, A/S level, S level
04: YTS certificate
05: RSA/Pitmans
06: City and Guilds
07: Open College Network Credit (OCN)
08: National or general BTEC/OCN or OND
09: NVQ/SVQ level 1 or equivalent
10: NVQ/SVQ level 2 or equivalent
11: NVQ/SVQ level 3 or equivalent
12: NVQ/SVQ level 4 or equivalent
13: GNVQ/GSVQ level 1 or equivalent
14: GNVQ/GSVQ level 2 or equivalent
15: GNVQ/GSVQ level 3 or equivalent
16: GNVQ/GSVQ level 4 or equivalent
17: Higher BTEC, HND
18: Nursing qualification
19: Teaching qualification
20: First degree
21: Diploma
22: Higher degree (e.g. PhD)
23: Other post-graduate qualification (specify)
24: Other professional qualification (specify)
Don't know

Q.9 Did you complete your learning/course?

01: Yes, completed it
02: No, gave up before end
03: Still studying it
Don't know

(If coded 02 at Q.9 go to Q.10. Other to Q.11)

Q.10 What is it that made you give up before you finished the course?
Probe: Anything else?

01: Cost/financial pressures
02: Too difficult/level set to high
03: Not demanding enough/level set too low
04: Course was closed down
05: Problems with childcare
06: Pressures of work/job change
07: Pressures of family commitments
08: Poor facilities on course
09: Moved away
10: Lost interest/got bored
11: Course not suitable
12: Learned as much as I wanted
13: Disliked tutor/teacher/other people on course
14: Changed to another course
15: Found I did not have time
16: Health reasons

17: Other (specify)
Don't know
None

SHOW SCREEN – multi choice (not inverted)

Q.11 Who pays/who paid the fees for this learning?
Probe: Who else?

01: No fees
02: Self
03: Family/relative
04: Employer/potential employer paid outside fees
05: Employer funded provision of learning
06: Training for work/government training scheme e.g. New Deal
07: Training credit
08: Local authority grant
09: Other government funding
10: Charitable trust or other non-government organisation
11: Other (specify)
Don't know

SHOW SCREEN - multi choice (not inverted)

Q.12: Sometimes learning can have other costs apart from fees. The following are some of the costs that people can experience when they do some learning. Thinking about your main learning of (**insert answer at Q.2b**), has it led/did it lead to any costs like these?

01: No other costs
02: Loss of wages/salary
03: Loss of overtime wages
04: Loss of benefit(s)
05: Cost of childcare
06: Travel costs
07: Costs of equipment (e.g. books/computers)
08: Other (specify)
Don't know

SHOW SCREEN

Q.13: What is the highest level of examination or qualification that you now hold, including any that you may have gained since leaving full-time education?

01: No qualifications held
02: Apprenticeship
03: GCSE/O level/CSE
04: A levels/highers, A/s level/S level
05: YTS
06: RSA/Pitman's
07: City and Guilds
08: BTEC First/SCOTVEC
09: ONC/OND/BTEC National
10: National Vocational Qualification (NVQ/SVQ) level 1
11: National Vocational Qualification (NVQ/SVQ) level 2
12: National Vocational Qualification (NVQ/SVQ) level 3

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13: National Vocational Qualification (NVQ/SVQ) level 4
14: GNVQ (specify level)
15: Nursing qualification
16: HNC/HND/BTEC Higher National
17: First degree
18: Diploma
19: Higher degree (e.g. MA, PhD)
20: Other post-graduate qualification (specify)
21: Other professional qualification (specify)
22: Other (specify)
Don't know

Q.14: How old were you when you finished full-time education?

01: 14 or under
02: 15
03: 16
04: 17
05: 18
06: 19
07: 20
08: 21
09: 22
10: 23
11: 24
12: 25 or more
13: Still at school/college/full-time student
Don't know

SHOW SCREEN

Q.15: How likely are you to take up any learning in the next 3 years?

01: Very likely
02: Fairly likely
03: Fairly unlikely
04: Very unlikely
Don't know

If not coded 01 at Q.1, ask Q.16. Others go to Q.17

SHOW SCREEN – multi choice (invert)

Q.16: From the following list what, if anything, would you say are the main things preventing you from learning these days?
Probe: Anything else?

01: Not interested/don't want to
02: Cost/money
03: Childcare arrangements/other dependents
04: Transport/too far to travel
05: I don't like being in groups of people I don't know

06: I don't know what is available
07: Work/other time pressures
08: I feel I am too old/too ill/too disabled
09: Worried about being out alone
10: Haven't got round to doing it
11: I know all that I need to know
12: Don't feel colleges/centres are welcoming
13: No suitable courses are available
14: I do not have the qualifications I need
15: I do not have the abilities I need
16: I am too nervous about the idea of starting learning
17: I would not be able to get time off work
18: I've tried learning in the past and it has been unsuccessful
19: Other (specify)
Don't know
None

Do not show screen for next question

MULTI CHOICE

Q.17: What (else), if anything, would you be most interested in learning about if you could?

01: Accountancy
02: Basic reading/writing/literacy
03: Basic maths/numeracy
04: Building trades
05: Business/administration/management
06: Car maintenance
07: Carpentry/DIY
08: Computer studies/information technology/using the internet
09: Cookery/catering
10: Dance
11: Dressmaking/tailoring/needlecraft
12: Driving (including HGV)
13: English as a second or additional language
14: English as a foreign language
15: English language/literature
16: Engineering (electronic/mechanical/construction)
17: Foreign languages (excluding Welsh)
18: Gardening/horticulture/garden design
19: Handicrafts
20: Law
21: History/local history
22: Music
23: Nursing/first aid/health studies
24: Arts: including painting/pottery/sculpture/design
25: Photography
26: Religion/bible studies/theology
27: Science/maths/statistics
28: Shorthand/typing/office training
29: Social sciences
30: Social work/social services/community care
31: Sports/gymnastics/keep fit
32: Welsh language
33: Other professional qualifications (specify)

34: Other vocational qualifications (specify)
35: Other academic subjects (specify)
36: Other 'leisure' subjects (specify)
Don't know

Show screen

Q.18: I will now read out a list of statements people have made about different types of learning. For each one, please tell me how much you agree or disagree. So firstly, how much do you agree or disagree with…

…people who get training find their jobs are more interesting
…people who get trained at work end up with better promotion or better pay
…people should not be expected to learn new skills for their career in their own time
…there is not enough help and advice available about the different sorts of learning people can do
…learning is something people do throughout their life
…I don't see why I should pay for learning that is to do with my job or career
…I am confident about learning new skills

01: Agree strongly
02: Agree
03: Neither agree nor disagree
04: Disagree
05: Disagree strongly
Don't know

Q.19: Have you heard of the European Social Fund?
Probe: You may have heard of it as ESF?

01: Yes
02: No
Don't know

If coded 01 at Q.19 ask Q.20, others go to Q.21

Q.20: What do you think the European Social Fund does?
Probe: Anything else?

01: Funding/financial support for education
02: Help for unemployed
03: Helps/distributes money to the disadvantaged groups in the third world
04: Allocates money to deprived/underprivileged communities
05: Helps/contributes money towards social development/amenities
06: Supplies grants
07: Finance/give money to local/worthwhile community projects
08: Money for small/new businesses
09: Help create learning/training for people
10: Other (specify)
Don't know

SHOW SCREEN - MULTI CHOICE (INVERT)

Q.21: Which of the following statements, if any, applies to your recent or current situation?

01: I have started a family

02: I have lost my job
03: I have taken early retirement/retired
04: I have been involved in a broken marriage/broken up with my partner
05: I have moved home/moved to a new area
06: I wanted promotion at work
07: I wanted to help my children learn
08: I had an illness
None
Don't know

SHOW SCREEN – multi choice

Q.22 Which of these do you have regular access to…

…at home?
…at work/through college or another institution?

Probe: Any others?

01: Telephone
02: Mobile phone
03: Pager/bleeper
04: Answering machine/service
05: Fax machine
06: Home computer/pc
07: Internet connection
None
Don't know

Q.23 People of different cultural backgrounds are likely to have different needs in relation to studying and learning. With this in mind, can you tell me which of the following best describes you?

01: White
02: Black – Caribbean
03: Black – African
04: Black – British
05: Black – other (specify)
06: Bangladeshi
07: Indian
08: Pakistani
09: Chinese
10: Asian – British
11: Asian – other (specify)
12: Arab
13: Cypriot
14. Other (specify)

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a report on the findings of a UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and learning

NAOMI SARGANT

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Naomi Sargant is Visiting Professor at the Open University and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at NIACE. She has published key studies on participation in adult learning over the last 20 years.

NIACE – the national organisation for adult learning – has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

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